

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

The Government's response to The Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report and Joint Chief Inspectors' Report Safeguarding Children

Extracts on Private Fostering

94. As recommended by Lord Laming, the Government has carried out a review of private fostering, which found that the critical factor in whether or not children in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded is that councils with social services responsibilities take a proactive approach in discharging their existing duties under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 1991. The standards and monitoring of council activity on private fostering will therefore be strengthened.

95. National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering will be introduced, which will be enforced through inspections by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The National Minimum Standards will require councils to take a more proactive approach to identifying private fostering arrangements. The standards will be issued in 2004.

96. This will be monitored by requiring councils to provide information centrally about the numbers of notifications they have of private fostering arrangements. Councils will start collecting this information from April 2004, subject to the agreement of the Statistics Technical Working Group.

97. Work on setting the National Minimum Standards will begin shortly and the current regulations (the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 1991) will be reviewed alongside this work.

98. The Immigration Service is committed to improving the spread of best practice by immigration officers in safeguarding vulnerable children who seek to enter the United Kingdom. Social Services are informed immediately if an immigration officer has reason to believe a child to be at risk of harm.

99. Following a review of the current systems, the government is proposing to introduce child-specific interview training for immigration officers. The Immigration Service will work in partnership with local social services to ensure better dissemination of information on children seeking to enter the United Kingdom.

Recommendations from the Climbié Enquiry Report

Recommendation 11. The Government should review the law regarding the registration of private foster carers. (paragraph 17.97).

Timescale - 2 years.

The Government has carried out a review of private fostering and will establish National Minimum Standards for private fostering (paragraphs 94-97).