

In the Headlines: Child Protection

What follows are excerpts from recent media editions that address issues relating to child protection...
Draw your own conclusions...

1. Four deaths a week in system offering 'patently inadequate' care for children, says Ofsted report

The Guardian, Thursday November 20 2008

An average of four children die each week in England in a system that offers "patently inadequate" standards of care in the networks of schools, care workers and children's homes established to protect them, according to Ofsted.

Councils have systematically failed to learn from the mistakes made in dozens of the most serious cases of child abuse, while too many frontline staff in schools and health centres are still unable to recognise signs of abuse, Ofsted said in a report yesterday.

Its verdict comes amid public concern after the death of 17-month-old Baby P in Haringey, north London, who died from 50 injuries despite being in regular contact with child protection officers and medics.

In the first report from Ofsted since it took responsibility in April 2007 for inspecting child protection facilities and assessing procedures, the watchdog raised urgent concerns about the system of serious case reviews, which are launched in the worst cases of abuse to help councils learn from mistakes

From the Ofsted report: "The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08" (Page 69, Paragraph 292 onward)

292 Local Safeguarding Children Boards are responsible for commissioning serious case reviews when a child dies or sustains significant harm, and abuse or neglect are known or suspected to be a factor in the incident. Following notifications, if criteria set down in Working together to safeguard children are met, the Local Safeguarding Children Boards may undertake such a review, involving relevant agencies, usually the local authority children's service, health, education and the police.⁵² Regional Government Offices provide guidance on carrying out these reviews. They should normally be completed within four months of the decision to carry one out.

293 Since April 2007, Ofsted has been responsible for receiving notifications of serious incidents involving children and for evaluating the quality of serious case reviews. Between 1 April 2007 and 31 August 2008, Ofsted received notifications from local authorities of 424 serious incidents, relating to 282 deaths of children, 136 incidents of significant harm or injuries and six incidents of which the outcome is not yet known. Four in 10 incidents involved babies under the age of one...

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Annual-Report/2007-08/The-Annual-Report-of-Her-Majesty-s-Chief-Inspector-2007-08

Between April 2007 and August this year, local authorities reported 424 serious incidents, including 282 child deaths, 136 cases of serious harm, and six in which the outcome was unknown. One in four involved babies under 12 months.....

The full story is available at: www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/nov/20/children-young-people-ofsted-abuse

2. Ofsted's child abuse report was misleading *The Observer, Sunday November 23 2008*

A 'misleading' figure included in a major government watchdog report has led to a false and vastly inflated picture of the numbers of children who die from abuse in England...

Last night the figures used to estimate the scale of child abuse in Britain