

**Children and Young People
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
14 December 2011**

**The Implementation of the Munro Review of
Child Protection**

Recommendation

To consider the implications and recommendations of the Munro Review of Child Protection for Warwickshire, along with the Government response and the actions taken or planned thus far in Warwickshire.

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 On 13 July, the Government published its response to the Munro Review of Child Protection. This was developed with advice from a widely represented Implementation Working Group. The response is seen as the first step on the journey to create the conditions for sustained long-term reform of the child protection system to deliver improved outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people. This report sets out the review recommendations, alongside the Government response and the actions taken or planned thus far in Warwickshire.

2.0 Overview

- 2.1 The Government has described its response to the Munro Review of Child Protection as “the start of a shift in mindset and relationship between central Government, local agencies and frontline professionals, working in partnership”. It has developed its response with advice from an Implementation Working Group, drawing on expertise from local authority children’s services, the social work profession, education, police and health services. The response adopts the principles proposed by Professor Munro and addresses each of the 15 recommendations of her final report.
- 2.2 The response describes the intention to reduce central prescription, place greater trust in local leaders and skilled frontline professionals, and build even stronger partnerships between Government, local authority children’s services, the voluntary and community sector, social work, education, police and health services. "Given the tighter financial climate, it will be ever more important for the range of agencies involved in child protection to work together effectively to get the most out of resources." It outlines how a number of Government reform programmes will contribute, how the Children’s Improvement Board (comprising ADCS, Solace, Local Government Group and DfE) considers safeguarding improvement a priority, and how the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) is driving long-term sector-led improvement to social work.

- 2.3 Headline changes include a major reduction in central regulation and guidance; a Chief Social Worker post in Government and Principal Child and Family Social Worker appointments in local authorities; improvements in the knowledge and skills base of the profession; an inspection framework with the experiences of children and young people at its centre; and greater transparency and coordination of local arrangements to provide early help to children, young people and families.
- 2.4 Implementation will start at once but, as Children’s Minister Tim Loughton writes in his Foreword, “change will evolve and best practice will be informed by experience, innovation and evidence. Our aim will be to create the conditions for sustained, long term reform which enables and inspires professionals to do their best for vulnerable children and their families.” The Government response addresses each of Professor Munro’s four reform themes.

3.0 Government Response to Munro’s Four Reform Themes

- 3.1 **Theme 1: Valuing professional expertise (Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4)**
Government will oversee a radical reduction in regulation, with a corresponding reduction in local rules and procedures. Shared local arrangements will need to be developed for robust management of timeliness, the quality of understanding and the effectiveness of the help provided. The role and impact of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should be strengthened, and external inspection will continue and will be conducted on an unannounced basis. The Government agrees with Professor Munro’s conclusion that there is no compelling case for a national database providing information on whether a child is subject to a protection plan or in care, but will keep under review how to help professionals to cooperate and share information; it endorses her view that local authorities should maximise the efficiency of their 24-hour access service to enable professionals to obtain relevant information.
- 3.2 **Theme 2: Sharing responsibility for the provision of early help (Recommendations 8, 10, 13)**
The Government wants a radical change in the way local agencies coordinate their work to maximise resources and increase the range and number of preventative services on offer to children and families; setting out transparent local arrangements will help practitioners working with children to access expertise, and should lead to the identification of the early help needed by a particular child or young person and their family, and to the provision of ‘an early help offer’ where their needs do not meet the criteria for receiving children’s social care services. The document outlines the contribution that should be made by Sure Start Children’s Centres, the new health visiting service family offer, the developing Positive for Youth vision, and the early intervention grant and Community Budgets.
- 3.3 **Theme 3: Developing social work expertise and supporting effective social work practice (Recommendations 11, 12, 14, 15)**

Building on the work of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), the Government wants to improve radically the knowledge, skills and expertise of social workers from initial training through to continuing professional development; work will be done on incorporating the specific capabilities identified by Professor Munro into the SWRB's professional capabilities framework. The new Chief Social Worker will advise Government on social work practice and the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and young people, and the introduction of Principal Child and Family Social Workers in local authorities will contribute to the development of a career path allowing for ongoing direct work with children and families, and to strengthening the voice of practitioners in management.

3.4 **Theme 4: Strengthening accountability and creating a learning system (Recommendations 5, 6, 7, 9)**

The Government agrees with Professor Munro that effective multi-agency working across a wide range of professionals is critical to success; that clear lines of accountability, and roles such as designated and named professionals, are vital; and that the system needs to become better at monitoring, learning and adapting. It is therefore retaining the statutory status of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services, and is working with partners to revise the statutory guidance on their roles (which is likely to include a local test of 'assurance' when considering additional duties on the DCS); formal consultation in autumn 2011. The Government recognises the potential of the ACPO risk principles referenced by Professor Munro, and will consider how these can be further embedded in the practice of the police and local partners.

4.0 **The Fifteen Recommendations**

4.1 **Recommendation 1:** the Government should revise *Working Together* and *The Framework for Assessment*.

Government Response: these will be revised by July 2012, with an interim amendment to statutory guidance *Working Together* on assessment by December 2011.

Warwickshire Response: no immediate action is planned in Warwickshire. There are no local plans to change prescription or monitoring arrangements with respect to assessment timescales until national changes are secure.

4.2 **Recommendation 2:** the inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of contributions of all local services to the protection of children.

Government Response: further work to take place over the summer on how inspectorates could work together to achieve this within available resources.

Warwickshire Response: no immediate action for Warwickshire. We are still awaiting the formal outcome of the inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children that took place in November under existing arrangements. A proposed national inspection framework is currently under consideration.

4.3 **Recommendation 3:** the inspection framework should examine the child's journey...and look at the effectiveness of the help provided.

Government Response: new inspection framework to be developed by Ofsted, and in place by May 2012 following consultation.

Warwickshire Response: no immediate action for Warwickshire. We are awaiting the formal outcome of our November 2011 inspection under the existing system. Warwickshire LSCB recently held a major event '*the child's journey*' organised by the WSCB Training Subcommittee and Warwickshire's Children in Care Council at which forty managers from Warwickshire's multi-agency children's workforce had an opportunity to hear the voice of Warwickshire's young people from the point of needing help to receiving it. This initiative is part of the Board's ongoing plan, in accordance with statutory guidance, to engage with children, young people and parents to ascertain their views and to inform the development of child protection services and systems and to ensure that they are child-centred.

4.4 **Recommendation 4:** local authorities and partners should use a combination of national and local performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability.

Government Response: the Government will work with Children's Improvement Board to finalise a data set for use by LSCBs, practitioners and managers, based on draft Munro data set.

Warwickshire Response: no immediate actions for Warwickshire. No plans to change local data collection until national changes are secure.

4.5 **Recommendation 5:** the existing statutory requirements for each Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to produce and publish an annual report for the Children's Trust Board should be amended, to require its submission instead to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, and, subject to the passage of legislation, to the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Government Response: the Government accepts this recommendation

Warwickshire Response: no immediate actions for Warwickshire. The next annual report will be published in spring 2012.

4.6 **Recommendation 6:** the statutory guidance, '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*', should be amended to state that when monitoring and evaluating local arrangements, LSCBs should, taking account of local need, include an assessment of the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families (including the effectiveness and value for money of early help services, including early years provision), and the effectiveness of multi-agency training to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

Government Response: the Government accepts this recommendation in principle and will work closely with the national LSCB chairs, ADCS and partner organisations, to consider existing and new mechanisms that could be in place locally for them to assess the effectiveness of early help and protective services.

Warwickshire Response: the Independent Chair of the LSCB will seek a statement of assurance from the Chair of the Children's Trust.

- 4.7 **Recommendation 7:** local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of a Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services before allocating any additional functions to individuals occupying such roles. The importance, as envisaged in the Children Act 2004, of appointing individuals to positions where they have specific responsibilities for children's services should not be undermined. The Government should amend the statutory guidance issued in relation to such roles and establish the principle that, given the importance of individuals in senior positions being responsible for children's services, it should not be considered appropriate to give additional functions (that do not relate to children's services) to Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services unless exceptional circumstances arise.
Government Response: the Government accepts this recommendation in principle. It is therefore retaining the statutory status of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services, and is working with partners to revise the statutory guidance on their roles (which is likely to include a local test of 'assurance' when considering additional duties on the DCS); formal consultation in autumn 2011.
Warwickshire Response: Warwickshire has already drafted an 'assurance test' that was well received by Ofsted within the 'Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children' that took place in November 2011.
- 4.8 **Recommendation 8:** the Government should work collaboratively with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Royal College of General Practitioners, local authorities and others to research the impact of health reorganisation on effective partnership arrangements and the ability to provide effective help for children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
Government Response: the Government accepts the spirit of this recommendation, but wants to go further and establish a co-produced work programme, to ensure continued improvement and the development of effective arrangements to safeguard and promote children's welfare as central considerations of the health reforms. The Department of Health will work with the Department for Education, NHS bodies, local authorities, professional bodies and practitioners to agree a co-produced work programme.
Warwickshire Response: no immediate actions for Warwickshire. LSCB Chair to seek assurances through the Health and Wellbeing Board that arrangements to safeguard and promote children's welfare are secured within current service remodelling. Children's Trust to be asked to produce an impact assessment on the range and need for early intervention in health.
- 4.9 **Recommendation 9:** the Government should require LSCBs to use systems methodology when undertaking Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and, over the coming year, work with the sector to develop national resources to: provide accredited, skilled and independent reviewers to jointly work with LSCBs on each SCR; and to promote the development of a variety of systems-based methodologies to learn from practice.
Government Response: the Government agrees, and will consider further how to implement.

Warwickshire Response: the LSCB will use SCIE [systems] methodology to review a 'near miss' in the autumn.

- 4.10 **Recommendation 10:** the Government should place a duty on LAs and statutory partners to secure sufficient provision of local early help services for children, young people and families.

Government Response: the Government accepts this recommendation in principle. The Government will work with partners to identify a route (including possible statutory duty) to effect the responsibility for early help by September 2011.

Warwickshire Response: Warwickshire Children's Trust to be asked by the LSCB for a report on the availability and effectiveness of early intervention with reference to the JSNA. This will specify how we identify children at risk of or suffering significant harm, the availability of services and the training available to staff in frontline settings. It will also set out the resourcing of early help services.

- 4.11 **Recommendation 11:** the Social Work Reform Board's Professional Capabilities Framework should incorporate capabilities necessary for child and family social work. This framework should explicitly inform social work qualification training, postgraduate professional development and performance appraisal.

Government Response: the Government agrees that the skill base and competence of social workers working in child protection must be both explicit and a force for improving practice, training and professional development. Detailed work will need to be done with key partners, including the SWRB, the HPC (which is expected to take over responsibility for the regulation of social workers in 2012) and the College of Social Work to explore how best child and family specific capabilities will fit within the wider capabilities framework, and how to make effective links between the capabilities, initial education, CPD and performance management.

Warwickshire Response: Warwickshire will keep progress in sight and under review through its Staff Development Advisory Group. Social Work Improvement Fund resources have been directed towards development opportunities for more experienced staff whose needs have not been well met in recent years.

- 4.12 **Recommendation 12:** employers and higher education institutions (HEIs) should work together so that social work students are prepared for the challenges of child protection work.

Government Response: the Social Work Reform Board is working with HEIs to improve the calibre of entrants and quality of education; the Government is exploring new models in achieving this such as 'Step Up to Social Work'.

Warwickshire Response: Warwickshire will keep progress in sight and under review through its Staff Development Advisory Group work programme.

- 4.13 **Recommendation 13:** local authorities and their partners should start an ongoing process to review and redesign the ways in which child and family social work is delivered.

Government Response: the Government accepts the case for redesigning the way in which child and family social work is delivered and recognises that this is already happening in a number of local areas. Local attention should be given to creating conditions which value the continuity of relationships with children and families, and promotes effective evidence-based social work practice.

Warwickshire Response: children's social care teams are currently being reorganised into teams containing 'practices' of common interest. A service review of EDT is being undertaken and our work with Dartington SRU will inform further re-design and the further introduction of evidence based programmes.

- 4.14 **Recommendation 14:** local authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker. This should be a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority, who is still actively involved in front-line practice and who can report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management.

Government Response: Government accepts the need for an explicit link between management and practice. Government recognises that the role of the Principal Child and Family Social Worker is necessary for the system to respond to the needs of children and families and be open to feedback. The Government also supports Professor Munro's view that experienced social workers should be able to follow a career path that takes them to senior levels in the organisation without losing their prime focus on developing social work expertise.

Warwickshire Response: the College of Social Work is developing a professional leadership group for children's services. Warwickshire will engage with this process. Provision will be made for Social Work Improvement Fund monies to support the introduction of this role.

- 4.15 **Recommendation 15:** a Chief Social Worker should be created in Government, whose duties should include advising the Government on social work practice and informing the Secretary of State's annual report to Parliament on the working of the Children Act 1989.

Government Response: the Government accepts the proposal for a Chief Social Worker to provide a permanent professional presence for social work within Government. The Government sees this role as being complementary to any corresponding professional body, for example, the College of Social Work. The Government is clear that the scope of this post will be to cover children and adults and will report jointly to the Secretaries of State for Education and Health.

Warwickshire Response: N/A

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The collaborative spirit in which Professor Munro's report *and* the Government's response to her recommendations have been developed is a model for future reviews of this nature, which will doubtless greatly aid implementation.

- 5.2 The wide range of those to whom Ministers have written, including schools, health bodies and the police (which are all currently subject to reform programmes), emphasises the extent to which effective child protection depends on the active and informed involvement of all those working with children, young people and families. It is essential that, in turn, they all recognise this responsibility.
- 5.3 Two issues remain of particular concern in Warwickshire. Firstly, there is continuing uncertainty (in the absence of a national database and adequate local arrangements) about the mechanism through which professionals concerned about a child's safety can find the relevant information they might need. Secondly, Munro was very clear about the risks of adding responsibilities to the role of the DCS. Warwickshire, in common with around a third of local authorities nationally has already decided to do so, primarily as a consequence of the need to make unprecedented levels of savings. There is a danger, within the context set by the Government response, that when the next serious failure of child protection comes to national attention (and Professor Munro is clear that risk can be managed, but not eliminated), a contributory factor will be seen to be that child protection was only a small, though important, part of the wide responsibilities of the person in overall charge.

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