

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

6 September 2012

The Implementation of the Munro Review of Child Protection

Recommendation

To consider the progress made or planned for Warwickshire following the Government's response to the Munro Review of Child Protection, and make any recommendations as appropriate

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 On 13 July 2011, the Government published its response to the Munro Review of Child Protection. It was informed by advice from an Implementation Working Group with a wide range of representation. This response was 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. Within this paper, the review recommendations are set out alongside the Government's subsequent actions and the progress made, or planned thus far, in Warwickshire.

2.0 Overview

- 2.1 The Government 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 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 adopted the principles proposed by Professor Munro and addressed each of the 15 recommendations of her final report.
- 2.2 The response described 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. It outlines how a number of government reform programmes will contribute, how the Children's Improvement Board (comprising ADCS, Solace, Local Government Group and Department for Education) considers safeguarding improvement a priority, and how the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) was 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 has started 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 reform which enables and inspires professionals to do their best for vulnerable children and their families.”

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 agreed 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 endorsed 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 outlined 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, 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 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 successes; 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 subsequently decided to retain the statutory status of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services, and committed to revise the statutory guidance on their roles.

4.0 **The Fifteen Recommendations**

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

Government Response: the Government launched new draft documents for consultation on 12th June 2012. The consultation period closes on September 4th 2012.

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. Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board is coordinating a response to the consultation.

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

Government Response: consultations on two new inspections to be introduced from April 2013 are currently underway:

- *Arrangements for the inspection of services for children looked after and care leavers*
- *Proposals for the joint inspection of multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children*

Warwickshire Response: No immediate action for Warwickshire. An inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children under the existing arrangements took place in November 2011.

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 is to be developed by Ofsted, and is scheduled to be in place from April 2013.

Warwickshire Response: no immediate action for Warwickshire.

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.

Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board published its latest report in spring 2012 and will comply with national requirements as and when they are introduced.

- 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 (Association of Directors of Children's Services) 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: Warwickshire continues to develop its early help offer and the Head of Service for Early Intervention has become a member of the LSCB, and an assessment of the effectiveness of early help has recently been commissioned by the Board.

- 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 in exceptional circumstances.

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. The

Department for Education (DfE) subsequently reissued statutory guidance on the roles in April 2012.

Warwickshire Response: Warwickshire's arrangements were tested in the November 2011 Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children where leadership and ambition were held to be 'Good'.

- 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 (DoH) will work with the DfE, NHS bodies, local authorities, professional bodies and practitioners to agree a co-produced work programme.

Warwickshire Response: no immediate actions for Warwickshire. The local impact of health reforms are kept under review by the LSCB.

- 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 is currently using systems methodology to examine a 'near miss'. This review is designed to provide us with the experience to utilise new methodologies, once they have been agreed, in any future serious case reviews.

- 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 decided that it was unnecessary to make this a statutory duty.

Warwickshire Response: Warwickshire continues to develop its early help offer, the Head of Service for Early Intervention has become a member of the LSCB and an assessment of the effectiveness of early help is to be considered by the LSCB in December.

- 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 has taken over responsibility for the regulation of social workers) 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 keeps progress in sight and under review through its Staff Development Advisory Group. We are in the process of introducing a new professional capabilities framework for social workers that has been developed in response to Munro.

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

Government Response: the Social Work Reform Board is working with HEIs to improve 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 is introducing an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) as the final stage of becoming a social worker. Under this scheme, newly qualified social workers have protected caseloads and enhanced training during their first year in employment after qualification.

- 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 also underway, as is a corporate strategic commissioning review. Our work with Dartington Social Research Unit will inform further re-design and encourage the development and introduction of additional evidence-based programmes.

- 4.14 **Recommendation 14:** local authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and 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: it has become clear that this post links to recommendation 15 and that Principal Social Workers will relate their work to that of the Chief Social Worker. A similar duty is proposed for adult services within the recently launched White Paper '*Caring for our future: reforming care and support*'. We need greater understanding of what will be required of Principal Social Workers before finalising our delivery models. In the interim, the Head of Safeguarding has been designated as responsible for the 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. Recruitment is underway and a post holder should be in place by the end of the year.

Warwickshire Response: N/A

5.0 Munro Demonstrator Site

- 5.1 Warwickshire has recently been selected by the Children's Improvement Board as one of nine national demonstrator sites, representing authorities who are taking a whole system approach to the implementation of the Munro recommendations in order to demonstrate an improvement in outcomes for children and families. In this context, a whole system approach means considering the leadership, workforce and systems aspects of change. The sites are not expected to have found detailed solutions nor be experts in particular areas, but to be willing to share the challenges they have identified, the process they are undergoing to manage them and the changes this makes.

- 5.2 As a 'Munro Development Demonstrator' Warwickshire has committed to:

Be part of a national observatory network, working as an action research project, to share and disseminate best practice and develop sector expertise. This will involve at least 2 national meetings during the life of the project. Each site must undertake to host 10 one day site visits between 1st October 2012 and 31st March 2013 for peer Councils including the production of briefing materials and follow up to lines of further enquiry. These visits are not a show and tell exercise but to support peer councils to work together on key challenges and co-create solutions. These could be in the form of action learning sets which demonstrators will be offered training and support to deliver.

There is also a requirement for us to participate in a national evaluation of the methodology of the demonstrators.

- 5.3 To become a 'Development Demonstrator' we were required to exhibit:
- A leadership commitment to champion the implementation of the Munro recommendations as part of a whole systems approach.
 - A developing approach to the effective commissioning of services including, where appropriate, work with the third sector, social enterprises and commercial business partners.
 - A track record of cultural change within the workforce including, as applicable, integrated working and social work reform.
 - Evidence of testing and learning from systems change which may include cross boundary and cross sector working, technological based improvements, personalised budgets, community budgeting and payment by results.
 - A strong learning culture and a commitment to sector led improvement.
- 5.4 As a 'Development Demonstrator' we will receive:
- £20,000 in cash to facilitate our commitments
 - Training in action learning and to develop research capacity
 - National CIB commissioned support for the observatory network
 - Access to learning from previous relevant pilots, best practice and sector expertise
 - Access to expertise in commissioning and productivity
 - Access to expertise in integrated working
- 5.5 During the initial set-up phase in September we will be supported to scope our project and have access to relevant learning from previous and current related projects. We will also be given support to develop our capacity to work in an action research manner, including the use of action learning sets.
- 5.6 During the main project delivery phase the sites will be supported to work together. At the conclusion of the project, the work will be evaluated and the sites supported to develop an on-going way to share learning and development.
- 5.7 This process provides us with a real opportunity to ensure that we are fully engaging in the new agenda for social work and learning all that we can from other local authorities.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The wide range of those to whom Ministers have engaged (including schools, health bodies and the police, 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 their families. It is essential that, in turn, they all recognise this responsibility.

- 6.3 Whole system change requires long-term commitment and energy. Government is beginning to put the underpinnings of the system in place and there are a number of key documents out for consultation.
- 6.4 As a 'Munro Demonstrator Site', our continued progress will remain under scrutiny and challenge, and we will have access to the high-quality support and knowledge of what works best that we need to ensure that we deliver the best possible services within available resources.

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