

Briefing Paper
The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report (May 2011)
A child-centred system

This is the final report of a review commissioned by the Government in June 2010. The report proposes changes to the current child protection system which are intended to create the conditions in which professionals can focus on the safety and welfare of children and their families and make the best professional judgments about the help they need.

The first report (*Part One: A Systems Analysis*) described how the current system had evolved, shaped by key driving forces:

- The importance of children and young people's safety and welfare to society as a whole;
- The uncertainty inherent in the work;
- Hindsight bias, which focuses on professional error rather than its causes; and
- The performance management culture which focuses on process and targets rather than outcomes for children and families.

That report sought to analyse why previous reforms had failed to achieve their goals, and concluded that these driving forces had produced a defensive system emphasising procedures and recording at the cost of developing the skills needed to work effectively with families.

The second report (*Part Two: The Child's Journey*) looked at how the system could be reformed to keep a focus on the child's experiences from needing help to receiving it.

This final report's recommendations are based on the following key principles of a good child protection system:

- **System should be child focused** – this means talking to children and young people and their families.
- **The family is usually the best place to bring up children** –sometimes difficult judgments have to be made about the right to protection from abuse and the right to be with the family.
- **Helping children and families involves working with them** - the quality of the relationships between the child, the family and professionals has a direct impact on the effectiveness of help.
- **Early help is better for children;**
- **Children's needs and circumstances are varied so the system should be flexible and offer variety;**
- **Good professional practice is informed by knowledge of the latest theory and research;**
- **Uncertainty and risk are features of the work** - risk management can only reduce risks not eliminate them;
- **The measure of success of child protection systems is whether children receive effective help.**

The review proposes the following areas for reform:

Valuing professional expertise by

- Removing barriers to professional judgment. This means a radical reduction in regulatory prescription – timescales, paperwork, inspection,

performance indicators – to a focus on principles that underpin good practice

- Move away from standardised services to professional judgement and local partnerships
- Move away from a compliance culture to a learning culture with more freedom to use professional expertise and skills.

Clarifying accountabilities and creating a learning system by

- Removing the statutory requirement for Children’s Trust Boards, possibly replacing its function with the new health and wellbeing boards which allow for local variability;
- LSCBs should maintain their scrutiny function and encourage multi-agency training;
- The discrete role of the DCS and Lead Member should be protected
- SCRs should be based on a systems learning methodology rather than a scrutiny model; reports should not be evaluated by Ofsted.

Sharing responsibility for the provision of early help because

- Preventative services do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services;
- Prevention improves children’s life chances as well as reducing abuse and neglect;
- Early help minimises adverse experiences, and damage done is hard to reverse; it’s cost effective compared to the cost of later more serious problems;
- Coordinated services maximise efficiency, and can identify children who need services from children’s social care at an earlier stage.

Developing social work expertise because good practice is not sufficiently widespread. Social workers need formal training and high intelligence to achieve the level of critical reasoning needed to make sound judgments and decisions about complex family situations. The professional skill of developing relationships which facilitate change has been gradually replaced by a focus on collecting information and making plans – the “rational-technical approach”. The requisite expertise for children and family social work is based on

1. Relationship skills;
2. Intuitive understanding and emotional responses; and
3. Using evidence, both from assessment and analysis, information

received, and research.

The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) is developing a Professional Capabilities Framework which will set out what is required in terms of a social worker’s knowledge, skills and capacity, which this review considers must include a sound knowledge base, the ability to undertake critical reflection and analysis, and skills in intervention.

The organisational context: supporting effective social work practice

The ability of social workers to provide effective protection and support for children is significantly dependent on how secure and contained they feel by the organisation. The review considers that organisations should review the way that children’s social work services are delivered locally. The *Reclaiming Social Work* model of Hackney is described as a case study. There is a need for career pathways that keep good practitioners in front-line practice. There should be a Chief Social Worker nationally to advise the Government on social work practice. There is a need to develop a more positive image for social workers.

Implementation of the proposals within the report will come about through the following **recommendations**:

1. *The Government should revise both the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children and The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families and their associated policies.*
2. *The inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, including health, education, police, probation, and the justice system to the protection of children.*
3. *The new inspection framework should examine the child's journey from needing to receiving help, explore how the...experiences of children ...inform and shape the provision of services, and look at the effectiveness of the help provided.*
4. *Local authorities and their partners should use a combination of nationally collected and locally published performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability.*
5. *The existing statutory requirement for LSCBs to publish an annual report... should be amended to require its submission to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, ...local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the health and wellbeing board.*
6. *..Working Together...should be amended to state that ... LSCBs should...assess the effectiveness of help provided to children and families, including early help services and the effectiveness of multi-agency training...*
7. *Local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of a DCS and Lead Member ... before allocating additional responsibilities to the roles....*
8. *The Government should work collaboratively with (health organisations) and others to research the impact of health reorganisation on effective partnership arrangements and the ability to provide effective help for children.*
9. *The Government should require LSCBs to use systems methodology when undertaking SCRs...*
10. *The Government should place a duty on local authorities and statutory partners to secure the sufficient provision of local early help services for children and their families.*
11. *The SWRB's Professional Capabilities Framework should incorporate capabilities necessary for children and family social work...*
12. *Employers and higher education institutions should work together so that social work students are prepared for the challenges of child protection work.*
13. *Local authorities and their partners shouldreview and redesign the ways in which child and family social work is delivered...*

14. Local authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice...and still actively involved in frontline practice..

15. A Chief Social Worker should be created in Government...

Hilary Corrick
Independent Member

A child-centred system: the Government's response to the Munro review of child protection, July 2011

A summary of key points by Reconstruct Research Service

The government want to build a child-centred system that:

- values professional expertise;
- shares responsibility for the provision of early help;
- develops social work expertise and supports effective social work practice; and
- strengthens accountabilities and promotes learning.

And this means:

- children and young people's **wishes, feelings and experiences are** central and their **feedback** is truly valued and acted on
- the **timeliness, quality and effectiveness** of help given to children, young people and their families is the key aim;
- there is a **range of help and services** to match the variety of needs
- **risk and uncertainty** are features of the system, risk can never be eliminated but it can be managed smarter;
- professionals are trusted to use their **professional judgment** in deciding how to help children, young people and their families;
- **professional expertise** is developed, **continuous learning and improvement means** reflecting critically on practice to identify problems and opportunities

The wider picture:

The Munro recommendations require local authority children's services, the voluntary and community sector, social work, education, police and health services to work together alongside the Children's Improvement Board, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Local Government Group and the DfE.

Health services must continue to improve arrangements for protecting children, with clinical commissioning groups, the NHS Commissioning Board and providers all taking responsibility.

Reforms to promoting effective early intervention are taking place in **the foundation years** where health visitors and children's centres will provide high quality services to build resilience and nurture wellbeing. There will be more two years olds in early education, providing more opportunities to offer timely support and advice for parents when they most need it. All this means greater collaborative working, particularly with health professionals and social workers, increased professional autonomy, and stronger accountability arrangements.

Schools will continue their responsibility to safeguard and promote wellbeing, school nurses will be able to focus on early help for school-aged children.

The National Crime Agency (NCA), a new crime-fighting agency, will lead on serious and organised crime such as child abuse. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) continues to tackle child sexual exploitation and promote education. From 1 July 2011 it takes on the national lead on missing children with a dedicated team.

The **family justice** system is currently the subject of a wide-ranging review, looking at a better system for children and families. The final recommendations of the Family Justice Review are due in the autumn.

Theme 1: Valuing professional expertise - Munro Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4

Recommendation 1

The Government should revise both the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children and The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families and their associated policies.

Government response – Accept: There needs to be a better balance between professional judgment and central prescription. The purpose of assessment is to understand the needs of children, young people and families and to provide timely and effective help to safeguard and promote their welfare.

All local frameworks must demonstrate timeliness, quality of assessment and the effectiveness of help offered, and that the arrangements are clearly understood between partners. Inspections will look for evidence that this is happening.

Timescale: interim amendments to timescales, combining initial/core assessments and the parameters for a good assessment will be made to *Working Together* by December 2011. A revised *Working Together to Safeguard Children and The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* will be issued by July 2012, together with a young person's guide to the statutory guidance.

Recommendation 2

The inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, including health, education, police, probation and the justice system to the protection of children.

Government response – Accept: Inspection will examine the contribution of all relevant local agencies to the protection of children and this will be done on an unannounced basis. The safeguarding of pupils in education will continue to come under the 'leadership and management' theme of the revised school inspection framework.

Timescale: Ofsted intends to have the new framework in place by May 2012

Recommendation 3

The new inspection framework should examine the child's journey from needing to receiving help, explore how the rights, wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people inform and shape the provision of services, and look at the effectiveness of the help provided to children, young people and their families.

Government response – Accept: Inspection will look at the effectiveness of help provided at all stages including initial contact, early help, protection and longer-term help. Safeguarding peer reviews, particularly in relation to self evaluation and external inspection, will be developed further.

Timescale: the new framework to be in place by May 2012.

Recommendation 4

Local authorities and their partners should use a combination of nationally collected and locally published performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability. It is crucial that performance information is not treated as an unambiguous measure of good or bad performance as performance indicators tend to be.

Government response – Accept: The draft Munro dataset included in the final report provides a good basis for further work on outcomes. The SWRB is already making progress on data collection tools to help with workforce planning and other workforce data collection instruments are also available. Work on the Public Health Outcomes Framework will also be relevant. The Government will work with the Children’s Improvement Board to finalise the draft data set which LSCBs, practitioners and managers will want to consider.

Timescale: The aim is to publish the suite of new nationally collected performance information by May 2012.

Theme 2: Sharing responsibility for the provision of early help - Recommendations 8, 10 and 13

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 - Accept in principle: The Government wants to go even further, so 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 to include:

- A shared understanding of future roles and responsibilities;
- Keeping professional leadership and expertise in the new system, including the continuing key role of designated and named professionals;
- Clarity about the future arrangements for partnership working, including the relationship between LSCBs and health and wellbeing boards;
- Developing clinical commissioning groups;
- How the NHS will contribute to early help;
- Future arrangements for training in safeguarding and child protection;
- The implications for the NHS of the proposed new inspection framework; and
- Learning about systems approaches to improving patient safety from the health sector

Timescale: A joint programme of work will be published by September 2011.

Recommendation 10

The Government should place a duty on local authorities and statutory partners to secure the sufficient provision of local early help services for children, young people and families. The arrangements setting out how they will do this should:

- *specify the range of professional help available to local children, young people and families, through statutory, voluntary and community services, against the local profile of need set out in the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA);*

- *specify how they will identify children who are suffering, or who are likely to suffer, significant harm, including the availability of social work expertise to all professionals working with children, young people and families who are not being supported by children's social care services and specify the training available locally to support professionals working at the front line of universal services;*
- *set out the local resourcing of the early help services for children, young people and families; and, most importantly*
- *lead to the identification of the early help that is needed by a particular child 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.*

Government response - Accept in principle: The State has a duty to protect children from abuse and neglect and help to prevent it happening in the first place.

All professionals working with children, young people and families should know about local arrangements to understand, make assessments of and help families who do not receive social care services, but who do require help.

Common and shared assessment processes should be agreed and established locally among practitioners and agencies. Professional practice should drive the development and implementation of local agreements and processes about helping families early and there should be explicit and clear alignment with arrangements to make referrals to children's social care services.

Practitioners in everyday contact with children; such as teachers in schools; should be able to create an environment in which children feel secure, able to express themselves and know where to turn to for help. They should have the confidence to refer on to skilled social workers any children who cause concern.

Locally each authority should have in place:

- sufficient provision of early help informed by the local profile of need;
- arrangements to identify children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, harm;
- access to child protection social work expertise for those professionals providing early help and at the boundary of statutory social care services;
- effective training accessible locally for those professionals providing early help;
- clear resourcing of local arrangements; and
- provision of an 'early help offer' to individual children and families.

Work on this will take account of the health reforms, including the roles and responsibilities of health and wellbeing boards, the work on sector-led improvement, the contributions of public health services and adult services dealing with poor mental health, domestic violence and substance misuse; and the role that universal services such as early years settings and schools should play.

An additional statutory duty to secure early help for children and families may be needed or there may be other, more effective approaches to increase the range and number of preventative services on offer.

Timescale: The Government will work with partners to identify the best way forward by September 2011. Implementation will be dependent on the approach identified.

Guidance on JSNA and joint health and wellbeing strategy to be published once the Health and Social Care Bill gains Royal Assent.

A new inspection framework will be in place from May 2012.

Local partners will decide when early help offer frameworks should be in place locally, with plans quality assured by LSCBs.

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, drawing on evidence of effectiveness of helping methods where appropriate and supporting practice that can implement evidence based ways of working with children and families.

Government response – Accept: Child and family social work will be redesigned to create an environment which values the continuity of relationships with children and families and promotes effective evidence-based social work practice, and where managerial, procedural and bureaucratic processes are limited to those which improve front line practice. This is to be taken forward locally, taking account of the views of service users, with the support of new self-assessment and improvement tools.

Timescale: Changes will be made, at a realistic pace determined locally, and kept continually under review.

Theme 3 – Developing social work expertise and supporting effective practice - Recommendations 11, 12, 14 & 15

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 – Accept: Detailed work now needs to be done with key partners, including the SWRB, the Health Professions Council (HPC); which is expected to take over responsibility for the regulation of social workers in 2012; and the College of Social Work.

Timescale: The SWRB has already developed the Professional Capabilities Framework and is working on a CPD framework. Ownership of both is expected to transfer to the College of Social Work around November 2011 with a view to implementing by autumn 2012.

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. In particular, the review considers that HEIs and employing agencies should work together so that:

- *practice placements are of the highest quality and – in time – only in designated Approved Practice Settings;*
- *employers are able to apply for special 'teaching organisation' status, awarded by the College of Social Work;*

- *the merits of 'student units', which are headed up by a senior social worker are considered; and*
- *placements are of sufficiently high quality, and both employers and HEIs consider if their relationship is working well.*

Government response – Accept: The SWRB is working with HEIs to improve the calibre of entrants to the profession and the quality of the education they receive and new models of social work education such as the 'Step Up to Social Work' employer-led scheme are being explored. The responsibility for setting professional standards for social workers is being transferred to the HPC. The Department of Health has asked the College of Social Work how to make best use of the Education Support Grant. Employers also have a major role to play; realistically this will be done in the medium to longer-term.

Timescale: Partnership arrangements with employers and HEIs should be in place by the end of 2012. Plans for designated approved practice settings, teaching organisation status developed by the College of Social Work and consideration of the merits of student units by summer 2012.

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 frontline practice and who can report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management.*

Government response – Accept: Local areas will not necessarily need to construct a new post but designate a professional social worker as practice lead.

The College of Social Work will convey the views and issues of all social workers, including Principal Child and Family Social Workers, to the Chief Social Worker. The College will provide CPD support founded on the Professional Capabilities Framework including a peer mentoring forum to support Principal Child and Family Social Workers in their roles and tasks. We will consider asking the College, with the SWRB, to provide a framework to guide the appointment of Principal Child and Family Social Workers for local authority, voluntary and private sector employers.

Timescale: Most local authorities will designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker by April 2012 and all will have done so by July 2012.

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 - Accept in principle: This post will cover children and adults and will report jointly to the Secretaries of State for Education and Health.

The detail needs to be developed including:

- the functions for the Chief Social Worker;
- their links with external bodies (including the College of Social Work); and
- in which Department the post would be located.

Timescale: The Government plans for a Chief Social Worker to be in post by late 2012.

Theme 4: Strengthening accountabilities and creating a learning system - Recommendations 5, 6, 7 and 9

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 – Accept: The role and impact of LSCBs should be strengthened and accountability for the safety and welfare of children must start with the most senior strategic local leaders. An annual report from the LSCB about the effectiveness of local early help and protective services is an important part of this. There will be issues to resolve about local health and police leads in the future, but for now, the Chief Officers of Police Authorities and cluster PCT chief executives are considered as those local leaders.

All local leaders will continue to have access to the published reports while the Government identifies a suitable legislative vehicle to amend the requirement to submit the report to the Children's Trust Board.

Timescale: The Government will identify the appropriate legislative vehicle as soon as practicable.

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 - Accept in principle: LSCBs are a fundamental aspect of local multi-agency arrangements to help and protect children and young people and are in a central position to assess the effectiveness of local help and protective services. It is important that this role is strengthened.

Resources for training, including joint training, and increased monitoring should be made locally available with responsibility equally shared among statutory partners. The role of the LSCB may be extended to provide and monitor specifically tailored child protection services in certain locations or services, for example detention facilities, young offender establishments, ports or airports and refuges.

Timescale: Work will take place over the summer with the national LSCB chairs, ADCS and partner organisations and the Government will publish an amendment (role of LSCBs in monitoring effectiveness of early help and protective services) to *Working Together* by December 2011.

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 - Accept in principle: The existing statutory status of the DCSs and the Lead Member for children's services will be retained, and the statutory guidance on the role of the DCS and the Lead Member revised. There will be a local test of 'assurance' so that whole councils and corporate teams can consider the merits and possible risks of planning additional duties on the DCS. Ofsted will also consider the leadership arrangements, the programme of peer challenge and review alongside any redesign of services.

Timescale: The Government will consult formally on the guidance in autumn 2011.

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;*
- *promote the development of a variety of systems-based methodologies to learn from practice;*
- *initiate the development of a typology of the problems that contribute to adverse outcomes to facilitate national learning; and*
- *disseminate learning nationally to improve practice and inform the work of the Chief Social Worker (see chapter seven).*

In the meantime, Ofsted's evaluation of SCRs should end.

Government response - Consider further: The Government agrees that systems review methodology should be used by LSCBs, that there should be a group of accredited reviewers who will contribute to national learning and thematic reviews of practice. The ongoing pilots and other systems review models will inform the way forward.

Further areas for consideration include:

- which organisation(s) would be able to take responsibility for recruiting the reviewers, accrediting their practice and deploying them to local areas;
- to whom the reviewers would be accountable; and
- the resourcing requirements.

Ofsted SCR evaluations should end but it is important to plan the transition carefully.

Timescale: For using systems review during the second half of 2011, for ending the evaluation of SCRs in their current form over the summer.

Reconstruct Research Service