

Covering letter from Anne Milton and Tim Loughton

Munro Review

Safeguarding children in the reformed NHS Co-produced work programme: Department of Health, Department for Education and stakeholders

31 October 2011

Following Professor Eileen Munro's independent review of child protection, the Department of Health and Department for Education agreed to develop a co-produced work programme with NHS, local government and other partners, to ensure continued improvement and development of effective arrangements to safeguard and promote children's welfare as central considerations of the health reforms.

We are now writing to set out the work programme that our two Departments have developed with stakeholders. This joint letter confirms our commitment to ensure robust arrangements are in place for safeguarding children in the NHS. It sets out how key issues will be addressed over the coming months. It builds on extensive input from stakeholders, for which we are grateful. The work programme will link into wider work streams that both Departments have underway on the NHS reforms and in response to the other Munro recommendations.

The Government has already made clear the importance we attach to handling the transition to the new health landscape. The Government response to the NHS Future Forum report (June 2011) confirmed:

- *"We believe that safeguarding children is of paramount importance, and expect the NHS to continue to improve processes for protecting children.*
- *"We will make sure that clinical commissioning groups and the NHS Commissioning Board are required to make arrangements to safeguard and promote children's welfare, and maintain providers' responsibilities for safeguarding. We will continue to explore with our key partners how best to ensure that professional leadership and expertise for safeguarding children are retained in the new system, including the continuing key role of named and designated safeguarding professionals, whose critical importance was recently highlighted in the Munro Review of Child Protection."*

The Department of Health, with colleagues from the Department for Education, hosted two events in September 2011 to help this work programme:

- a workshop with key stakeholders to discuss scope and priorities, testing out how we could together take forward work in the light of Professor Munro's recommendations, and
- a scenario-based simulation event which started to pull out lessons and design principles for safeguarding children in the new system.

We are delighted that these events and earlier work have brought together the range of relevant health professionals, designated and named safeguarding professionals, Strategic Health Authority leads, commissioners, the inspectorates, third sector organisations, public health, local government, Directors of Children's Services, social workers and the police. All have been committed to improving further the NHS contribution to safeguarding children, effective partnership working and support for professionals to improve outcomes for children.

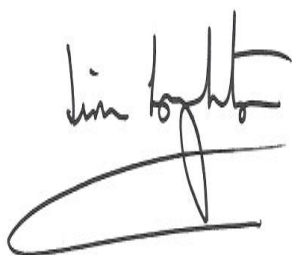
These sessions have given clear steers on the priorities for attention and suggested ways forward. These are reflected in the work programme we now attach.

While the Health and Social Care Bill sets a clear top level framework of statutory responsibilities, there were a number of pressing questions about how this will work in practice. In response, for Phase 1 of the work programme, Sir David Nicholson, NHS Chief Executive and Chief Executive Designate of the NHS Commissioning Board, has asked the Chief Nursing Officer to lead a programme of work with the two Departments and the NHS. This will develop a fuller framework of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and test this with NHS and local authority partners through workshop events later this year, and with the wider stakeholder group in January 2012. We believe this will provide an important foundation and look forward to seeing progress.

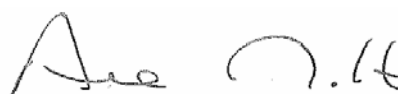
Building on this accountability framework, Phase 2 of the work programme from January 2012 will look at how best to make progress on specific issues. The timetable for this work will take account of progress on other elements of the NHS reforms and on work to respond to other Munro report recommendations, including those on early help, joint inspection, professional development, and system learning.

So the programme will continue to evolve over time. We plan to bring the wide group of stakeholders together in January and again next Spring 2012 in order to review progress and agree next steps. Those who wish to contribute their views on this programme of work are invited to do so via the following email address: safeguardingchildren@dh.gsi.gov.uk.

We look forward to working with you on these important issues.



TIM LOUGHTON



ANNE MILTON