

**Working Together Professional Advisory Group
Third meeting: 6th December 2011, 12:30-14:30 – Notes of Meeting**

Attendees:

ACPO / CEOP	Ann Arscott
ADASS	Susanna White
ADCS	Simon Westwood
ADCS	Amy Weir
CAFCASS	Bruce Clark
Children England	Maggie Jones
The College of Social Work	Corinne May-Chahal, Claire Barcham
NHS	Dr Steven Halford
NHS Confederation	Jo Webber
NSPCC	Phillip Noyes
Ofsted	John Goldup
Royal College of GPs	Dr Vimal Tiwari
Royal College of Nursing	Liz Kennard
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health	Sue Eardley
Royal College of Midwives	Janet Fyle
Royal College of Nursing	Liz Kennard
Royal College of Psychiatrists	Dr Tara Weeramanthri
Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association	Rosalind Godson
National Ambulance Safeguarding Group	David Blain
Secondary Headteachers Forum	Lynn Watson
Lancashire Probation Trust	Penny Barker
Government	Jeanette Pugh (Chair – items 4, 5 and 6 - DfE), Fiona Harrow (Chair – items 1, 2 and 3 - DfE), Mike Box (HO), Chris Humphrey (DH), Jonathan Bacon (DfE), Samantha Jones (DfE), Jenny Gray (DfE), Steph Brivio (DfE), Jim Addison (DfE), Poppy Harrison (Youth Justice Board)

Apologies:

Steven Pryse (NCVYS), Alex Kirwan (DfE), Sue Woolmore (National Independent LSCB Chairs Network), Sue Robb (4Children), Amanda Philips (Primary Headteachers Forum), Cassandra Harrison and Helen Johnston (Local Government Group), Lorna Hadley (Association of YOT Managers).

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

1.1 Fiona Harrow welcomed attendees to the third meeting of the Working Together Professional Advisory Group, and introduced herself as the new Head of Child Protection Policy Division within the Department for Education. The floor was opened for introductions.

Item 2: Munro implementation - progress update

2.1 Fiona highlighted the key areas of progress on wider Munro implementation which had been made since the last meeting:

- i. A creative thinkers group had been established to consider Serious Case Review methodologies;

- ii. Evaluations of the phase one trials of new assessment processes in eight local areas were now being completed, and the evidence is being considered;
- iii. Informal consultation on local performance information items had now been completed;
- iv. Consideration of the most effective route to delivering a transparent offer of early help was ongoing; and
- v. The revision of the Working Together guidance was ongoing, with input from across Whitehall.

Item 3: Draft revision of Working Together Chapter 3 on Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)

3.1 Jim Addison presented a revised draft of Chapter 3. He outlined the approach which had been taken to the revision, in line with the principles advised by the Group in previous meetings. In their revision of Chapter 3, officials had sought to:

- i. Remove practice guidance, illustrative sections and repetition;
- ii. Clarify the role of LSCBs, their specific functions, and their relation to other local bodies;
- iii. Incorporate Chapter 4.

3.2 There was a broadly favourable reaction to the revised Chapter. Some specific suggestions were made to improve it further. These included:

- i. The Chapter could be further slimmed down, as some principles and advisory elements which could be considered practice guidance could be removed;
- ii. The need to reflect the changed organisational landscape linked to health reforms under the forthcoming Health and Social Care Bill, such as ensuring that reference is made to Health and Wellbeing Boards;
- iii. To give further consideration to how the role of LSCBs could be strengthened and reflected in the guidance.

3.3 Jim asked the Group to send more detailed comments by email.

Item 4: Draft revision of Working Together Chapter 7 on child death review processes

4.1 Jeanette took over the chair and invited Jenny Gray to present the draft to the Group and invited comments.

4.2 The Group welcomed the draft, but suggested that it could be simplified further to clarify the process and remove ambiguities. In particular, they suggested that:

- i. The distinction between expected and unexpected deaths should be expanded on and clarified, and to clarify that expected deaths can still be subject to safeguarding processes;
- ii. The use of terminology should be consistent, particularly when referring to declaration and certification of deaths;
- iii. Further detail should be added to the section on children dying

- abroad, to clarify its scope and application;
- iv. Flowcharts could be used instead of lengthy text to describe processes;
- v. The role of the LSCB in co-ordinating the range of review processes that may be underway should be made explicit;
- vi. Consideration should be given to communications materials which can be developed to explain the child death review process and the organisations involved to families. Officials agreed to circulate an existing leaflet to the Group.

4.3 Jenny thanked the Group for their comments, and welcomed further comments by email.

Item 5: Evidence from trials of new assessment processes

5.1 Following the discussion at the last meeting of emerging evidence from the eight trial authorities, Steph Brivio provided the Group with a further update. She stated that all the trials had now been extended to 31st March 2012. She reminded members that the Government Response to the Munro Review had stated that any interim amendment to the statutory guidance would only be made subject to evidence from the trials, and that evidence from the stage ending 1st December was now being considered.

5.2 Steph stated that all trial areas had imposed locally-determined timescales in place of the existing statutory timescales, and were recording the reasons why cases exceeded locally set timescales. The majority of the trial areas had kept to a 45 working day overall timescale to ensure that children and families got timely decisions about the conclusions from assessment and were clear on the next steps. She outlined emerging evidence that in all local areas which had removed the distinction between initial and core assessments, managers and front-line practitioners had reported positive findings and that it allowed for a continuum of assessment that can be built on throughout the process. There was evidence that the new processes required greater management and supervision time, but that this meant managers were more proactively engaged in cases, with front-line practitioners receiving greater support. Risk management and active discussion and supervision have been prominent throughout the trials and it will be important to distil the learning to all areas. Whilst there have been positive findings, some of the trials are still in the very early stages and so learning is limited. Impact of the changes on children and families has been difficult to gauge and more evaluation is required.

5.3 Steph then opened the floor to questions. There were a number of questions asking whether the trials had caused cultural and behavioural changes in other parts of the system. For example, Susannah White suggested that it would be useful to know whether the change in process has also led to increased time spent on multi-agency working; others asked whether the flexibilities had resulted in social workers' spending a greater proportion of their time with the families, or whether the change resulted in help being given earlier. It was agreed that these and other questions would

be considered as part of the evidence collection from the ongoing trials. There was some discussion around the support that frontline social workers needed to move away from the prescription to exercise their professional judgment. This shift should not be underestimated and any learning needs to be reflected in updated guidance in *Working Together* and as part of training and development programmes.

5.4 Jeanette Pugh stated that officials would look for further opportunities to disseminate learning from the trials.

Item 6: AOB

6.1 Two items were discussed under AOB:

- i. Chapter 2 and section 11

6.2 Jonathan Bacon put forward a proposal to incorporate section 11 statutory guidance into the revised *Working Together*. He outlined the rationale and possible approaches for doing so. The Group was in agreement with this proposal, and Jonathan invited further ideas on the best approach.

- ii. The Assessment Framework

6.3 Jonathan confirmed that following the very helpful discussion at the last meeting there had been further consideration of whether or not to incorporate the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* into the revised *Working Together*. Benefits had been identified if these two statutory guidance documents were brought together. However, given the potential unintended consequences that had been discussed it was proposed that the Government would consult on the two separate documents. The full 12 week formal consultation would be used to consider the options further.

- ii. Next steps

6.3 Jonathan outlined the key next steps:

- a. Jonathan invited members of the group to provide further comments in writing on the draft Chapters by 16th December;
- b. Officials will bring together all revised Chapters and present to the Group at the next meeting, for discussion of how the guidance can be further revised as a coherent whole;
- c. The next meeting will take place in January; Samantha Jones will be in touch to arrange a date;
- d. The email addresses of the Chapter Owners will be sent to the Group for them to send further comments.

6.4 Jeanette Pugh thanked everyone for their time and contributions.