

**Working Together Professional Advisory Group  
Second meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011, 15:00-17:30 – Notes of Meeting**

**Attendees:**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| ACPO / CEOP   | Dr Zoe Hilton   |
| ADASS   | Susanna White   |
| ADCS  | Simon Westwood  |
| ADCS  | Amy Weir  |
| Children England  | Maggie Jones  |
| The College of Social Work  | Corinne May-Chahal  |
| Local Government Group  | Cassandra Harrison  |
| NCVYS   | Steven Pryse  |
| National Independent LSCB Chairs Network  | Sue Woolmore  |
| NSPCC   | Phillip Noyes   |
| Primary Headteachers Forum  | Amanda Philips  |
| 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 Psychiatrists  | Dr Tara Weeramanthri  |
| Royal College of Midwives   | Janet Fyle, Carol King  |
| 4Children   | Sue Robb  |
| Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association   | Rosalind Godson   |
| National Ambulance Safeguarding Group<br>Secondary Headteachers Forum<br>Lancashire Probation Trust<br>Government | David Blain<br>Lynn Watson<br>Penny Barker<br>Jeanette Pugh (Chair, DfE), Mike Box (HO), Chris Humphrey (DH), Jonathan Bacon (DfE), Samantha Jones (DfE), Jenny Gray (DfE). |

**Apologies:**

Poppy Harrison (Youth Justice Board); Lorna Hadley (Association of YOT Managers); Fiona Smith (Royal College of Nursing); Jo Webber (NHS Confederation); Alan Bell (Department of Health); Steph Brivio (Department for Education); Alex Kirwan (Department for Education).

**Item 1: Welcome and introductions**

1.1 Jeanette Pugh welcomed attendees to the second meeting of the Working Together Professional Advisory Group (the Group). She noted that some attendees were not present at the last meeting, and that two additional members had joined, so the floor was opened for introductions.

1.2 Jeanette noted that the last meeting had brought a very productive and

constructive discussion. A note of that meeting had been circulated to attendees, and was agreed. Jeanette informed the Group that the Department will publish notes of the Group's meetings on the Munro Review website.

## **Item 2: Munro implementation - progress update**

2.1 Officials had provided the Group with a written update on progress that had been made since publication of the Munro Review in May 2011 and the Government response in July. Jeanette provided information on the following areas:

- i. A roundtable meeting jointly chaired by DfE and ADCS is due to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> November. The roundtable is an opportunity to discuss with multi agency professionals and stakeholders, Professor Munro's recommendation on early help and how this can be taken forward locally. Further discussions will be held and an update will be given at the next PAG meeting.
- ii. The Joint Work Programme between the DH and the DfE was published on 31 October, alongside a joint letter from Anne Milton and Tim Loughton confirming the commitment of the two departments to ensure robust arrangements for safeguarding children in the NHS of the future. The letter is available on the Munro Review website.
- iii. A number of CWDC staff are being brought into the Department's Safeguarding Group, and discussions are underway on how to manage the transition.
- iv. A consultation on nationally collected and locally published performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability was launched on 2 November and will run until 23 November 2011.
- v. The Department is taking forward discussions with a small number of LSCBs to develop pilots of a systems-based approach to Serious Case Reviews. The importance of a managed transition to a new approach to Serious Case Reviews was discussed.
- vi. The Education Select Committee will hold an oral evidence session on the College of Social Work on 8 November;
- vii. The College of Social Work provided an update on the progress being made to implement recommendations from the Munro review that focussed on developing social work expertise and supporting effective practice. Implementation Groups have now been established and are focussing on implementing the reforms.
- viii. ACDS updated the Group that they are aware of work progressing to define the role of Principal Child and Families Social Workers, with several local authorities taking steps to define elements of that role.

## **Item 3: Draft revision of Working Together chapter 1**

3.1 Building on discussions at the last meeting the DfE had produced a draft

version of a revised Chapter 1. The draft was underpinned by four principles:

- i. A child-centred approach;
- ii. A focus on statutory 'must-dos';
- iii. A focus on a version of the key principles recommended by Professor Munro as needing to underpin a good child protection system; and
- iv. An overall reduction in length.

3.2 Jonathan Bacon presented the draft to the Group and invited comments. There was a generally favourable reaction to the draft. Some specific suggestions were made to improve it further, which will be considered as drafting continues. These included:

- i. Consideration should be given to whether it is appropriate for the legal principles/welfare checklist from the Children Act 1989 to be included.
- ii. That the definition of what is meant by 'child-centred' be clearly set out in terms of the legal principle of paramountcy;
- iii. The need for all types of school to maintain appropriate levels of safeguarding should be strengthened;
- iv. The transition from a compliance culture to a learning culture needs to be supported by defining what is meant by a learning system;
- v. The language should be as accessible and 'arresting' as possible;
- vi. The importance of setting out roles in a way which is as future-proof as possible in the current changing landscape were discussed;
- vii. To ensure consistency in terminology; in particular, it was suggested that 'keep from harm', which has a clear definition, should be used consistently throughout Working Together;
- viii. It was suggested that adding a reference to the statutory role of the DCS in chapter 1 would be beneficial;
- ix. The importance of emphasising the principle of interagency working and information sharing in order to protect the child was discussed;
- x. To clarify the guidance's application to older, vulnerable children, and reference legislation that governs the entitlement of provision to the age of 25 for this group.

3.3 Jonathan asked the Group to submit specific drafting comments by email.

3.4 Jonathan updated the Group on initial thoughts on the approach that would be taken to the revision of the other Chapters. The Group were favourable towards the proposals set out. Jonathan stated that drafts would be sent to the Group for comment by email as they became available.

#### **Item 4: Evidence from trials of new assessment processes**

4.1 Jonathan gave a presentation to the Group of emerging evidence from the trials being carried out in a number of local authorities to test new assessment processes. He made the group aware that evidence from the trial areas was being collated to inform future decisions over potentially removing nationally

prescribed timescales for initial and core assessments. He stated that officials would be meeting with local authority representatives from all the trial areas on 4<sup>th</sup> November to gain further evidence. Several issues were raised by members of the Group, on which they felt further evidence should be sought from local authorities. In particular, these were:

- i. the impact on other agencies, in particular schools, of the more flexible approach to timescales;
- ii. what work had been undertaken in linking the Common Assessment Framework to initial and core assessments to provide a continuum of assessment;
- iii. the role of the lead professional on assessments, and whether professionals other than social workers have been able to lead assessments where appropriate.

4.2 Jonathan agreed to provide further feedback to the Group at the next meeting.

4.3 Local Government Group referred to the work that has been conducted by a number of the Community Budget areas on issues such as information sharing and assessment. Further details on work taking place to help troubled families turn their lives around and give local authorities new freedoms to pool resources breaking down bureaucracy and find joined-up solutions for troubled families can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/multipleproblems/a0078047/community-budgets>.

#### **Item 5: Revision of the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families***

5.1 Jonathan presented some initial thoughts on the revision of the Framework for Assessment, including that it could potentially be revised to present only the key principles that underpin the assessment of Children in Need, the assessment framework triangle and its statutory elements. He also suggested that, in this reduced form, it could be incorporated into chapter 5 of Working Together. He invited comments from the Group on this approach.

5.2 The discussion was inconclusive. Although there was a positive reaction to the idea of incorporating the Assessment Framework into Working Together, there was concern that certain risks would need to be considered before a decision could be made. In particular, there was concern that the wider application of the Assessment Framework to other social service assessments, including children in care and adoptions, would potentially be lost by incorporating it into Working Together, which is culturally viewed as only applying to child protection. There was some discussion as to how this risk could be mitigated, such as by looking at how Working Together is presented to better reflect the entirety of its scope.

5.3 Officials will develop this proposal further ahead of a more detailed discussion at the next meeting.

## **Item 6: AOB**

6.1 Two items were discussed under AOB:

i. Practice guidance

6.2 Jeanette Pugh put forward for discussion the fact that the development of practice guidance should in future be led by the sectors. She linked this to the revision of Working Together, emphasising that post-publication we should be thinking about how the sectors take on responsibility for developing practice guidance which is no longer incorporated into the version produced by central Government. She invited comments from the Group on this approach.

6.3 There was a consensus that this was a positive approach that should be pursued, as professionals in the system were the best placed to advise other professionals in terms of practice guidance. Some attendees voiced the opinion that guidance would be best developed by national organisations which directly support practitioners, rather than local governing organisations.

6.4 There was some discussion as to how this work should be co-ordinated to minimise duplication and co-ordinate overlaps between guidance developed. There is also a need to ensure that strong accountability and quality assurance mechanisms are in place at a local level. It was also emphasised that the transition from central prescription to sector-led guidance would need to be carefully managed.

ii. Consultation

6.5 There was a discussion about the most effective ways of consulting on the revised Working Together. Jonathan suggested that the Group should inform him if they were planning to run events with their networks to discuss the consultation, as officials would be willing to attend such events to discuss the revision and gain feedback. The Group was supportive of this approach and agreed to send details of appropriate events.

## **Item 7: Date of next meetings**

7.1 The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December (12.30 – 15.00).

## **Meeting close**

8.1 Jeanette thanked everyone for their time and for a very constructive discussion.

