

Working Together Professional Advisory Group
First meeting: 22nd September 2011, 10:00-12:30 – Notes of Meeting

Attendees:	
ACPO / CEOP	Dr Zoe Hilton
ADASS	Susanna White
ADCS	Simon Westwood
ADCS	Amy Weir
CAFCASS	Bruce Clarke
Children England	Kathy Evans
Children England	Kevin Garrod
The College of Social Work	Corinne May-Chahal
Local Government Group	Helen Johnston
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	Fiona Smith
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health	Sue Eardley
Royal College of Psychiatrists	Dr Tara Weeramanthri
Youth Justice Board	Poppy Harrison
Royal College of Midwives	Janet Fyle
Government	Jeanette Pugh (Chair, DfE), Mike Box (HO), Chris Humphrey (DH), Steph Brivio (DfE), Jonathan Bacon (DfE), Sam Jones (DfE), Jenny Gray (DfE)
Apologies:	
National Ambulance Safeguarding Group	David Blain
Secondary Headteachers Forum	Lynn Watson
Ministry of Justice	Helen Souter
Home Office	Caroline Hart

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

1.1 Jeanette Pugh welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Working Together Professional Advisory Group (the Group), and the floor was opened for introductions.

Item 2: Update on progress and scope of the Working Together revision

2.1 Jeanette updated the Group on progress that had been made since publication of the Munro Review in May 2011 and the Government response in July. Key areas to note:

- i. Ongoing work with DH on the joint work programme to consider the impact of the health reforms on child protection;
- ii. Work to consider Professor Munro's recommendation on an early help offer;

- iii. The trials of the new assessment process has been extended until December 2011 and to a number of Community Budget areas;
- iv. OFSTED are consulting on new inspection arrangements.

2.2 Jeanette set out the primary function of the group, which is to advise on the revisions to the statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. The remit does not cover the wider implementation of Munro. Officials will provide an update to the Group on the Munro strands of work ahead of the next meeting.

2.3 Jeanette set out the context and aims of the *Working Together* revision. She outlined the analysis that Professor Munro had reported in her review and her focus on '*reducing central prescription and interference and placing greater trust in local leaders and skilled frontline professionals*'. Jeanette noted that Ministers are committed to substantially reducing *Working Together*, requiring the consideration of the guidance from first principles to reduce it to its essential elements.

2.4 The Group was informed of the timetable for the revision of *Working Together*: the Government has committed to reissuing the guidance by July 2012, with interim amendments to be made by December 2011, subject to evidence from the trial authorities. This means aiming to consult on a revised draft from January, given the requirement for a twelve week consultation.

2.5 The floor was opened to questions. Bruce Clarke (CAFCASS) asked about the link between the respective revisions of the *Framework for Assessment* and *Working Together*. The Group was informed that the *Framework for Assessment* revision would need to be considered alongside the *Working Together* revision, and we may consider incorporating the *Framework* into *Working Together*. It was agreed that this should be an item for discussion at the next meeting in November.

2.6 Chris Humphrey (DH) highlighted the need for the *Working Together* revision to take account of ongoing Health reforms.

Item 3: Proposed Terms of Reference

3.1 Jeanette introduced the terms of reference for the Group, clarifying in particular its role as an advisory forum at which attendees are asked to represent the views and interests of their organisations in order to inform the revision of the guidance. It was of course understood that individual organisations would also wish to respond formally to later public consultations.

3.2. Jeanette stated that officials would aim to circulate papers a week ahead of meetings.

Item 4: *Working Together* revision – key principles for discussion

4.1 There was a detailed discussion of the principles which should underpin the revision of *Working Together*. Consensus emerged on the following:

- i. *Working Together* should remain inter-agency guidance and concern the whole system;
- ii. It should be targeted at both leaders and frontline professionals;
- iii. It should clarify the respective responsibilities of agencies and professionals and how they work together;
- iv. It should be child-centred;
- v. It should be limited to must-dos and key principles that are applicable to everyone and clarify accountabilities;
- vi. It should give explicit recognition to the current dynamic climate in which people are operating, but the principles should transcend this;
- vii. Material, such as practice and supplementary guidance, should be removed from *Working Together* but should remain accessible in some form. Options include making it an electronic resource on the website with hyperlinks from *Working Together*, or for individual sectors to develop and disseminate the guidance;
- viii. The *Framework for Assessment* should be incorporated into *Working Together*, and should be subject to discussion at the next meeting;
- ix. It should encourage a learning culture and the use of professional judgment;
- x. The impact and risk of removing particular pieces of guidance from *Working Together* should be considered together with potential mitigation;
- xi. A robust evidence base should be built to support development of practice guidance, which may become sector-led;
- xii. The role of LSCBs in monitoring the effectiveness of agencies and developing local solutions should be considered and their annual reports could act as a lever for checking how this is working;
- xiii. A communications strategy should be developed alongside the revised guidance to rebut any perception that shortened guidance signals lesser importance;
- xiv. The place of statutory guidance within the overall system should be mapped, alongside other levers so that the most appropriate levers are used to achieve the reform objectives.

4.2 Certain issues were also raised which need to be taken into consideration in revising the *Working Together* guidance, in particular:

- i. Enforcing statutory guidance can be problematic; the revised guidance should clarify the legal responsibilities of those covered by the statutory guidance and clarify its legal framework;
- ii. It is important that the guidance gives consideration to the role of the voluntary sector, and is applicable to that sector;
- iii. The NICE guidance may provide a useful model of streamlined guidance limited to key principles, as separate from a broader reference base of evidence and practice guidance.

Next Steps:

4.3 Jeanette thanked participants for a very rich and constructive discussion. She summarised the key points emerging (as set out at paragraph 4.1) and set out the following next steps:

- i. The next meeting of the Advisory Group will address the *Framework for Assessment* and discuss emerging evidence from authorities undertaking trials of new assessment processes;
- ii. Officials will provide an update to the Group at that meeting on the progress of wider Munro implementation;
- iii. Officials will map the current system and analyse how this will change in the short and medium term, in order to scope the levers within the system;
- iv. A revised draft of the guidance will be worked up on the basis of the principles set out above. This will form the basis of a 12 week consultation which would aim to run from January;
- v. Officials will also develop an impact assessment on the proposed changes to *Working Together* ahead of the consultation in January.

Item 5: AOB

5.1 No AOB was tabled.

Item 6: Proposed dates of next meetings

6.1 The next meetings will take place on Thursday 3rd November (15.00 – 17.30) and Tuesday 6th December (12.30 – 15.00).

Meeting close

7. Jeanette thanked everyone for their time and valuable contributions.