

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

8 September 2011



## PLYMOUTH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

### REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

#### INTRODUCTION:

The aim of this report is to inform Members of national and local developments in safeguarding within the Plymouth area and the remit of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB). The report will help to identify how the PSCB is working with agencies in the local area to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

#### CONTENT:

##### National Developments

In July 2011, the Government published its response to the Munro Report based on the advice of the Implementation Working Group. Professor Munro will continue to advise the Government and will undertake an interim assessment of progress in spring 2012. The response stresses that the changes that are implemented will be evolutionary aimed at long term sustained reform.

The response draws attention to other reforms within the public sector and their relevance to the subject.

**Health Services:** The Government will require clinical commissioning groups and the NHS Commissioning Board to make arrangements to safeguard and promote children's welfare and will maintain providers' responsibilities for safeguarding. The roles of named and designated safeguarding professionals will continue.

**The Foundation Years:** The response mentions an expanded health visitor workforce and a network of Sure Start Children's Centres. More two year olds will be in early education.

**Schools:** Schools will continue to be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils and there will be the school nurse programme of development.

**Police:** The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) will continue as a Command in the newly created National Crime Agency (NCA). From the 1<sup>st</sup> July CEOP assumed the national lead on missing children.

**Family Justice:** Currently subject to review, consideration of how the system can be shaped to deliver more effectively for children and families will be factored into the Family Justice Review's final recommendations due in the Autumn.

The Response document then comments on the four themes of the Munro Review:

**Valuing Professional Expertise:** The Government will oversee a reduction in the amount of regulation and a revision of the statutory framework. The role and impact of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) will be strengthened and work will continue to see how performance information can be better used. The role of external inspection will continue and Ofsted is designing a new inspection framework that will focus on the effectiveness of help given. The Government accepts that there is no compelling case for a national information sharing database, but will keep under review the question of how best to share information including on a 24 hour basis.

**Sharing Responsibility for the Provision of Early Help:** The aim is to increase the range and number of preventative services on offer through identification of local need and local resourcing of the early help services. It is seen as important that these early help services also address the needs of older children and there will be a cross Government policy statement on the Positive for Youth vision published in the Autumn.

**Developing Social Work Expertise and Supporting Effective Social Work Practice:** The Government wants social workers to be more concerned with the effectiveness of the help they provide rather than compliance with procedures. Building on the work of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) the plan is to improve the knowledge, skills, and expertise of social workers from initial training through to continuing professional development. The Government will continue to work with the SWRB and other organisations and will establish a Chief Social Worker to advise Government and encourage the creation of a Principal Child and Family Social Worker in each Local Authority.

**Strengthening Accountabilities and Creating a Learning System:** The Government will retain the existing statutory status of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for children's services. Work is underway with relevant professional organisations to revise the statutory guidance on the role of the DCS and Lead Member. The Response states that "while final structures are matters for local determination, it is likely that the guidance will make it very clear that in reviewing the span of responsibilities there should be a local test of 'assurance' so that whole councils and corporate teams are able to consider the merits and possible risks of planning additional duties on the DCS"

### **Timescales Highlighted in the Response Document:**

Revision of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* by July 2012.

An interim amendment relating to timescales, removing the distinction between initial and core assessments will be made to *Working Together* by December 2011.

New Ofsted inspection framework by May 2012.

Publication of the suite of new nationally collected performance information by May 2012.

The DoH and DfE will work with NHS bodies, local authorities, professional bodies and practitioners to publish a joint programme of work by September 2011. (This was in response to Munro recommendation 8 which called on the need to research the impact of health reorganisation. The response to this recommendation was 'Accept in Principle'.

Recommendation 10 was also in the 'Accept in Principle' category. This recommendation called on the Government to place a duty on local authorities and statutory partners to secure the sufficient provision of local early help services. The Government will work to identify the appropriate route to effect the responsibility for the provision of early help by September 2011.

Professional Capabilities Framework to be implemented by Autumn 2012.

The Government will work with employers and Higher Education Institutions to build partnership arrangements to have in place by end of 2012 and will consider the merits of student units by Summer 2012.

Most Local Authorities will have chosen to designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker by April 2012 and all will have done so by July 2012.

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

The Government will publish an amendment (role of LSCBs in monitoring effectiveness of early help and protective services) to *Working Together* by December 2011.

The Government will consult formally on the revision to the statutory guidance on the role of the DCS and Lead Member in Autumn 2011.

The Government wishes to 'Consider further' recommendation 9 relating to SCRs and will consider this during the second half of 2011. Further consideration will be given to ending the evaluation of SCRs in their current form over the summer.

## **Local Developments**

The PSCB has received an update on the progress regarding the possible creation of a Multi Agency Strategic Hub in the City. This would be a sealed information hub to allow the exchange of information between key agencies to assist the decision making process in safeguarding. The scheme is already operating in Devon. A business case is being drawn up and will come back to the PSCB for consideration at their September 2011 Full Board Meeting.

The NSPCC have given notice that they will be accepting no more referrals for the Young Witness Support Scheme which has been a well thought of service that has operated across the South West Peninsula for a number of years, partially supported financially by the four LSCBs, and previously by the 4 ACPCs (Area Child Protection Committees.) The Independent Chairs across the peninsula have agreed that this is a matter to be drawn to the attention of the respective Children Trust Boards (CTB) to explore a way forward. The commissioning of this operational service has rested with LSCBs because of historical reasons and it is suggested that in the future CTBs across the area work together, with the help of the LSCBs, to resolve this issue and commission a similar operational service in the future.

The Munro Review had looked at the link between Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and the Child Death Overview Panels (CDOP), however the Report fails to mention anything about the findings. Different options have been proposed and the Peninsula Safeguarding Group will be making contact with the review team to see if there are any indications for the way forward. In the meantime the group have agreed to continue the existing CDOP contract until April 2013 with some variations and subject to further discussions with NHS Plymouth.

The Home Office have published a Domestic Homicide Review process which could possibly overlap with the SCR process and the Peninsula Safeguarding Group are keen to ensure that there is absolute clarity over who is doing what, where such circumstances arise.

The PSCB now has formal representation on the Safeguarding Adults Board, via the Safeguarding Manager.

There will be a local Safeguarding Children week held from 21 - 25 November, which will be held in conjunction with our partner "LSCB's" in Devon and Torbay. The Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board will be holding its conference during the week. The keynote speaker is Camila Batmanghelidjh, the founder of two children's charities - "The Place to Be" and "Kids Company", where she currently works with some of the most traumatised young people living in London.

The PSCB is continuing to work with young people representatives to redesign the PSCB website with the aim of ensuring it is more user friendly and easily accessible to children and young people.

The Chair of the PSCB together with the Chair of the Plymouth Children's Trust Board and the Director of Services for Children and Young People, met with Tim Loughton MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families) and Oliver Colville MP (Plymouth Sutton and Devonport) at Westminster on 31 March 2011 to discuss events surrounding the Little Ted's Nursery. The aim of the meeting was to seek assurance that the national recommendations made by the PSCB were being implemented and it was made clear by the Minister that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) were taking on board the issues. The Minister was very complimentary about how the PSCB and partners had dealt with this situation. A few days later the Government's EYFS Review, written by Dame Claire Tickell, was published and the report had a chapter called "Keeping Children Safe". This chapter contains specific recommendations regarding safeguarding in early years settings and states that the author has paid particular attention to recommendations arising from the PSCB Serious Case Review into the Little Ted's Nursery.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The PSCB continues to ensure that agencies work well together within the city in order to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people. Participation in Full Board and Sub Group meetings/work programmes continues to foster effective multi agency working, the sharing of best practice and a joined up approach to resolving issues of concern. This is especially important at a time of widespread major organisational change within almost every partner agency represented at the PSCB and at a time when financial constraints are a challenge to all partners.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

Jim Gould  
Independent Chair of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board  
24 August 2011