



NSCB Newsletter

Edition No 10:
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Recent Developments in the NSCB – a message from Chris Few, Independent Chair of the NSCB

Welcome to the March 2011 edition of the NSCB Newsletter. There have been a number of recent developments with regard to the Board and how it operates that I want to bring to your attention. These have included:

- recruiting Lay Members to ensure transparency and improve our accountability to the people of Nottinghamshire
- adopting a revised constitution that will strengthen our ability to provide rigorous scrutiny and challenge to agencies working locally. The revised constitution established an Executive with delegated decision making powers to enable the Board to operate more efficiently
- radically re-designing the Board sub-structure to make more use of task and finish groups to expand the opportunities for staff to become involved in the work of the Board.

All of these changes were formally adopted at the Board meeting in January 2011. Documents describing these developments are available on the NSCB webpage.

The January 2011 Board meeting was, as with all Board meetings, very busy. Consideration was given to a diverse range of subjects including:

- the potential impact of inter-agency reorganisation on domestic abuse services
- Persistent Absence - the arrangements for children receiving education in Nottinghamshire Learning Centre
- Pathway to Provision update (including the implementation of the CAF)
- Safeguarding Improvement Programme – update regarding NSCB performance measures.

As many of you will be aware the Safeguarding Improvement Programme was established in response to the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services in March 2010, which identified a number of shortcomings in local safeguarding arrangements. Since this time there has been a huge effort to bring about improvements. The Safeguarding Improvement Programme is overseen by an independent Improvement Board, of which I am a member. We have seen evidence of real improvements in recent months.

In January 2011 Ofsted returned to undertake a smaller scale unannounced inspection of social care Reception and Assessment services. The findings of that inspection have now been published and were overall positive about both the services directly inspected and improvements made in the areas of concern identified in the earlier inspection. These could not have been achieved without the commitment of staff across all agencies and I would like to thank you for the hard work that made them possible.

As always I hope that you will find this newsletter informative. Please ensure that it is distributed as widely as possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature appears to read "Chris Fawcett" in a cursive style.

Professor Munro's Interim Report

Professor Eileen Munro has published her interim report of her review of child protection arrangements in England. Amongst the key issues covered in the report are:

Chapter two considers the importance of primary and secondary levels of preventative services and includes reference to other relevant reviews. The chapter considers current policies of prevention and early intervention, with a specific focus on identifying children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. It points out that there is strong support for building up services which focus investment on tackling emerging problems, and that intervening early can save money by avoiding more costly interventions later.

Chapter three considers what expertise children need social workers to have, building on the work of the Social Work Taskforce and the Social Work Reform Board. It stresses the importance of children and young people's participation in decisions that affect their lives and highlights that evidence shows that children are still not adequately included in child protection work. The report looks at various aspects of this situation, including evidence that frontline workers prioritise the bureaucratic elements of their work and complying with performance indicators so that finding time to spend with children and young people comes low on the list; it suggests improvements and questions the prevailing model of a social worker predominantly working alone with the child and family.

Chapter four looks at how children's social care needs to change, in order to create a work environment that helps frontline social workers have the skills, time and resources to provide effective help to families. The review recognises the critical role that first-line managers have in creating the

cultural and practice changes required, and that they will need support and training to provide them with the skills that enable reflective practice. Key points include the following:

- Managing time
- Supervision
- Professional development
- Tools
- The Integrated Children's System (ICS)
- Procedures
- Monitoring performance
- Social Work Practices

Chapter five covers shared learning and accountability, includes consideration of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), the importance of local leadership, inspection, sector-led improvement, Serious Case Reviews, and revision of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. The review is working towards a reduced and refocused set of data to capture the minimum information needed to run effective children's social care services. This would comprise a core of data collected by central government and discretionary data published by local areas in a standardised form to enable benchmarking, comparability and public accountability – a key feature of which would be feedback from children, young people, families, staff and partners.

The review is clear about the importance of retaining external inspection, both for the improvement of services and to provide accountability, but says it must be focused on child-centred practice, the quality of learning across organisations and positive outcomes rather than compliance with process. It recommends that announced inspections (with their accompanying bureaucratic burden) should end as part of the forthcoming revision of the inspection framework, and that unannounced inspections should be 'given a broader remit across the contribution of all children's services to the protection of children'.

The review is considering how the LSCBs' remit for multi-agency training and learning could be strengthened – including the Serious Case Review (SCR) function; this includes learning from experience in other sectors, such as health. The review recommends that Ofsted's evaluation of SCRs should end.

Chapter six draws together the progress made by the review so far, and the issues it has presented in its first and interim reports. It emphasises the complexity of the system, and the fact that it is the cumulative effect of the reform areas described that will be important. It also points out that removing the current level of prescription will require local leaders and practitioners to take greater responsibility for their judgements and actions.

The full report is available on the Department for Education Website or can be accessed by clicking [here](#)

Training

The training programme for 2011 – 2012 will be published on the NSCB website towards the end of March. This will contain details of the courses available for the coming year and how to apply for these. This information will also be circulated electronically via partner agency representatives. The NSCB is not printing paper copies of this programme. The training section of the website can be accessed by going to www.nottscc.gov.uk/nscb and then selecting Working with Children, Young People, Adults and Families from the menu on the left-hand side of the page.

Ofsted Evaluation of Serious Case Reviews

Ofsted has published an analysis of their evaluation of serious case reviews between April 2009 and March 2010. Full details are available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Statistics/Other-statistics/Learning-lessons-from-serious-case-reviews-2009-2010

The analysis identifies main messages that recur throughout the reviews, highlighting the importance of:

Focusing on good practice

A consistent finding from the reviews was that there had been a failure to implement and ensure good practice rather than an absence of the required framework and procedures for delivering services.

Ensuring that the necessary action takes place

Local Safeguarding Children Boards identified failures to ensure that the necessary action was taken because of gaps in the services that were available; decisions which, with the benefit of hindsight, were found to be wrong; insufficient consideration of the child's individual needs; and 'professional drift' resulting in a lack of action.

Carrying out assessments effectively and using all sources of information

A common finding was that none of the main agencies had a complete picture of the child's family or a full record of the concerns. Holistic assessments of risk were not made routinely in these cases and agencies tended to respond reactively to each situation rather than having seen the whole context.

Implementing effective multi-agency working; valuing challenge, supervision and scrutiny

Some agencies, such as housing and probation services, needed to recognise the importance of their role in safeguarding children. Reviews also found that there had been insufficient challenge by those involved. The statements of parents or others in the family should not have been accepted at face value; individual professionals and agencies should have questioned their own and others' views, decisions and actions; and there were shortcomings in the supervision and intervention by managers.

The **NSCB** has identified key local issues from serious case reviews conducted recently and these have been communicated through the distribution of a two part poster, copies of which are available on the NSCB webpage

Web-enabled version of NICE Guidance

In the September edition of this newsletter we highlighted the fact that Tri-x, a company that specialises in developmental work in the field of safeguarding, had produced a web-enabled version of Working Together to Safeguard Children. The same company have produced a web-enabled version of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) document 'When to Suspect Child Maltreatment'. The NICE guidance was developed for healthcare professionals but may be of interest to all who work with children or families. The purpose of the guide is to assist in the identification of children who may be at risk. The guidance can be accessed via the link below.

<http://nice.proceduresonline.com/index.html>

A new name for Parentline Plus

Parentline Plus, which is a service for parents that offers advice and guidance 24 hours a day, seven days a week through their free telephone advice line **0808 800 2222** reverted to it's original name of Family Lives on 20 January 2011. The contact details for the service have remained the same.

Every Child Matters website

As part of the Government's commitment to reduce the number of websites it manages and owns, the Department for Education has recently completed work to move relevant content from the ECM website to the 'children and young people' section of the DfE site.

A copy of the ECM site is saved on the National Archives, which can be used for reference and research purposes. This can be accessed at

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/*/http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters

Ofsted Inspection of CAF/CASS

A recent inspection of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAF/CASS) has praised the service for its 'outstanding work' to ensure that all children receive a service with no delay, despite an 80% increase in care demand over the last two years.

Head of Service Neville Hall, who represents CAFCASS on the NSCB, said “We knew we had made some significant improvements with our case allocations and our work with local partners to embed proportionate ways of working. It’s a bonus to have this validated externally.”

The full report is available on the Ofsted website or can be accessed by clicking [here](#)

Proposed changes to the Vetting and Barring Scheme

Earlier this month the Government announced that is intended to scale back the vetting and barring scheme (VBS) and criminal records regime. The proposals, which come after a comprehensive review of the existing system, include:

- the merging of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to form a new body providing a barring and criminal records checking service
- a reduction of the number of positions requiring checks to just those working most closely and regularly with children and vulnerable adults
- portability of criminal records checks, which will allow the same check to be used by more than one organisation
- an end to a requirement for those working or volunteering with vulnerable groups to register with the Vetting and Barring Scheme.

The necessary legislative changes will be included in the Protection of Freedoms Bill. Subject to parliamentary approval, the Bill is expected to become law by early 2012. At that point the NSCB Safer Working Practice – Practice Guidance will be revised and updated.

Further information is available on the Independent Safeguarding Authority’s website:

www.isa-gov.org.uk

New National Guidance

Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation

This document seeks to provide advice and support to frontline professionals who have responsibilities to safeguard children and protect adults from the abuses associated with female genital mutilation (FGM). It sets out a multi-agency response and strategies to encourage agencies to cooperate and work together. The guidance provides information on:

- identifying when a girl (including an unborn girl) or young woman may be at risk of being subjected to FGM and responding appropriately to protect them

- identifying when a girl or young woman has been subjected to FGM and responding appropriately to support them
- measures that can be implemented to prevent and ultimately eradicate the practice of FGM.

Forced Marriage and Learning Disabilities: Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines

This practice guide was developed to assist professionals encountering cases of forced marriage of people with learning disabilities. It has been developed to accompany *Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage (MAPG; 2009)* and should be read in conjunction with that document. This document focuses on the particular issues faced by agencies responding to concerns regarding forced marriage when one or both of the parties has a learning disability.

A copy of both of these documents is available on the Useful Safeguarding Documents NSCB Webpage. In the coming weeks the NSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures will be reviewed to ensure that the key messages are incorporated into local procedures. All agencies will be notified of any changes made to these.

Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme

The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme, sometimes referred to in the media as Sarah's Law, gives members of the public – whether they are a parent, carer, guardian or another interested party – a formal mechanism to make enquiries about individuals who are in contact with children. If police checks show that the individual has a record for child sexual offences, or other offences that might put the child at risk, the police will consider sharing this information with the person(s) best placed to protect the child, usually the parent, carer or guardian. The CSOD will become operational in Nottinghamshire from 1 April 2011. Applications for disclosure should be made in person to the Nottinghamshire police control room on 0300 300 9999.

The process will be led by the police but may involve other agencies, particularly Children's Social Care. A series of briefings have been delivered to staff from a range of agencies highlighting the key provisions of the scheme. Procedural guidance setting out how it will operate locally will be published on the NSCB website shortly. In the interim further information about the scheme is available on the Home Office website and can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

**The next publication of the NSCB Newsletter will be June 2011.
Copies of this newsletter are available from
www.nottsc.gov.uk/nscb**