



Boomer, Linda

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Sent: 09 February 2007 13:43
To: Boomer, Linda
Subject: Consultation Document - Safeguarding Board - Questionnaire 2007
Attachments: GALDOCS-#97692-v1-Consultation_Document_-_Safeguarding_Board_-_Questionnaire_2007.DOC

Linda

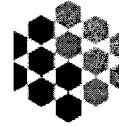
Please find enclosed the consultation document on “The Establishment of a Regional Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland” – Questionnaire January 2007.

Many thanks

Stephen Knox
Assistant Director
NIGALA

20/02/2007

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

QUESTIONNAIRE JANUARY 2007

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety invites you to respond to this consultation document on the Establishment of a Regional Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

Responses should be sent by letter or email to:

Linda Boomer
Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety
Child Care Policy Directorate
Room D1.4
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Email: linda.boomer@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Your response must be received by 9th February 2007.

(Please tick box)

I am responding: as an individual on behalf of an organisation.

Name: **Stephen Knox**

Job Title: **Assistant Director**

Organisation: **Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem**

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Before completing your response, please see Appendix 1 about the effect of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on the confidentiality of

Questions to answer. Please write clearly.

PROPOSED ROLE AND SCOPE OF THE SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (SBNI)

Q1: Do you agree that there should be one region wide Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)? If not, what alternative model would you suggest?

Yes – if it can achieve a comprehensive coordinated and consistent approach to safeguarding practice, this will be a significant step forward.

Q2: Are there any other broad elements or interfaces which you think should be included in the scope of the SBNI's role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children?

Paragraph 4.2 sets out the scope of the role of the SBNI. As explained this reflects the intention that safeguarding is more than child protection alone. Greater clarification of the scope of the role is required than the 4 broad elements described.

A key area for the SBNI will be the development of thresholds regarding children in need, and those considered to require protection. Consistency of approach in agreeing and applying thresholds will be a measure of the Board's success.

Q3: Do you agree that a single database should be created for at risk children? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

I agree – this would appear to be the logical approach.

Q4: Are there any other objectives which you think should fall to the SBNI?

No further objectives. As stated earlier some more detailed explanation as to what the broad objectives entail would be helpful. Care needs to be taken not to make the scope too wide.

Q5: Do you agree that statutory powers should be created to enable the Minister to require the setting up of similar databases as outlined in the Children’s Act 2004? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed

APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF CHAIRMAN AND LAY MEMBERS OF THE SBNI

Q6: Do you agree that the chairman and lay members should be public appointments? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed, their appointment must be open and

transparent.

Q7: Do you agree that chairpersons and lay people should not serve for more than 2 terms, with each term lasting no more than 4 years? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Period of tenure agreed. The emphasis here
should be on ensuring people with suitable expertise
and experience to serve in these posts. Candidates
of the highest caliber and experience are required.

Q8: What kind of experience, knowledge and qualifications do you consider is important for the independent chairman to have?

Senior Management experience including management of
children's services, knowledge of child care, child protection,
relevant research. Professional qualification in social work or
related discipline. Experience of multi-disciplinary working
should be an essential criterion.

Q9: What kind of experience, knowledge and qualifications, if any, do you consider is important for lay members to have?

Life experience, knowledge of child care and child protection
issues. Service user.

Q10: Do you agree that the SBNI should have its own secretariat and budget? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed

HOW THE SBNI WILL OPERATE

Q11: Do you agree that membership of the SBNI should be drawn from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed

Q12: Do you agree that membership of the SBNI should be a statutory obligation? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed. Vital as a means of ensuring that arrangements are in place and cooperation happens.

Q13: Do you agree that membership of the SBNI should be drawn from senior members of relevant agencies? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Yes, this must be the case, so that they can commit their organisations to policy and procedural matters and hold their organizations to account. However, they must not be so removed from practice that they do not know what is happening on the ground and must ensure good channels of communication to them. Nor must inter agency rivalries cloud the purpose of the Board.

Q14: Do you agree with the level of seniority of the posts which are being proposed to comprise the SBNI? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed

Q15: Do you agree that individual Agencies should be held accountable for ensuring co-operation and promotion of the welfare of the child? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed – if Regional Policies and Procedures are to mean anything, this should be the case.

Q16: Do you agree with the range of Agencies/Interests proposed to comprise the core membership of the SBNI? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

I propose that the Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) be a core member of the SBNI. NIGALA has a unique insight into the public law and adoption cases coming before the courts across Northern Ireland, and the safeguarding issues these raise. As the Agency works with the country’s most vulnerable children, it can make an invaluable contribution to the SBNI. The SBNI would also benefit from representation from young people themselves.

Q17: Do you agree with the proposal for rolling membership of the SBNI? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

It would seem that a rolling membership is a pragmatic response to the limited the number of places on the SBNI.

Q18: Do you agree that rolling membership of the SBNI should be reviewed no later than every 4 years? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed

Q19: What other expertise do you consider appropriate for the SBNI to utilise in order to discharge its functions effectively?

Academic expertise – research – evidence based

practice.

YOUNG PERSON'S REFERENCE GROUP

Q20: Do you think that a Young Person's Reference Group should be established? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

This is a useful idea, but there is an argument for ensuring young people should have a more direct route to the SBNI, namely a seat on the Board. This poses significant challenges, and training for young people and Board members alike would be required.

Q21: Do you agree that the Young Person's Reference Group should be available to the SBNI through the chairman? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

As above

Q22: What age group should the Young Person's Reference Group be drawn from?

Mid teens to early 20s. A case could be made for a younger group to contribute.

Q23: How many members of the Young Person's Reference Group should there be?

The SBNI may require more than one group to refer to.
A consideration of VOYPIC's structure may be required here.

Q24: How do you think that membership of the Young Person's Reference Group should be selected?

Advice should be taken from organizations such as VOYPIC, NICCY, and the Children's law Centre in this regard.

Q25: How often do you think membership of the Young Person's Reference Group should be reviewed?

Every 4 years.

SAFEGUARDING PANELS

Q26: Do you agree that there should be a Safeguarding Panel in each of the 5 new Trust areas? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

Agreed

Q27: What interests/disciplines/agencies/providers do you think should comprise membership of the Safeguarding Panels?

The membership of the Safeguarding Panels should largely reflect that of the Safeguarding Board.

An independent chair for each of these panels is recommended.

Q28: What interests/disciplines/agencies/providers do you think should comprise membership of the sub-groups which will support the Safeguarding Panels?

This will depend on the issues to be addressed by the sub-groups, but it will reflect the above. Sub-groups will not require representation from all the disciplines/ agencies, but their membership should possess the knowledge and skills to carry out their tasks.

Q29: What do you think the functions of the sub-groups should include?

- Panel should set out annual work programme for sub-groups
- Operationalizing the strategic direction set out by SBNI
- Reporting to Safeguarding Panels
- Examining key areas
- Identifying resource deficits

SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

Q30: What do you consider the criteria to initiate a Serious Case Review should be?

- When a child dies (including death by suicide) and abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor in the child’s death.

A Serious Care Review should be considered;

- When the case gives rise to concerns about the way in which local professionals and services work together to safeguard children.

Q31: What do you consider to be a reasonable time frame for the completion of a Serious Case Review to be?

6 months approximately

TIMESCALE

Q32: Is the timescale proposed reasonable? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

No view on this

Q33: Where, or with which host organisation, do you think the SBNI should be located?

No view on this

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

Q34: What difficulties, if any, do you foresee in the transfer of functions from ACPCs to the SBNI? What actions are needed to resolve these difficulties?

No view on this

Q35: Is the time frame for transfer proposed reasonable? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

No view on this

COMMUNICATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Q36: What do you consider to be the most effective ways to engage the range of stakeholders, including the wider community who can contribute to the effective safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children?

Media coverage – television, radio and print.
Community Meetings
SBNI to have open meetings.

EQUALITY SCREENING

Q37: Is there any indication or evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?

Group	Yes	No	Not Known
Religious belief			
Political opinion			
Racial group			
Age			
Marital status			
Sexual orientation			
Gender			
Disability			
Dependency			
Comments			

Q38: Do different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this policy issue?

Group	Yes	No	Not Known
Religious belief			
Political opinion			
Racial group			
Age			
Marital status			
Sexual orientation			
Gender			
Disability			
Dependency			
Comments			

Q39: Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of this type create problems that are specific to them?

Group	Yes	No	Not Known
Religious belief			
Political opinion			
Racial group			
Age			
Marital status			
Sexual orientation			
Gender			
Disability			
Dependency			
Comments			

Q40: In relation to implementing this policy, is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering the policy or by working with others in Government or in the larger community?

Yes	No	Not Known

Please elaborate:

Q41: With reference to Questions set out please summarise how you believe the policy may impact on organisations' obligation to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.

Q42: Are there any relevant groups which you believe should be consulted at this time?

Please specify

Q43: What data do you think will be required to ensure effective monitoring of the policy following implementation?

Annual report
Performance Measures
Quantitative and Qualitative

Q44: Any other comments on the policy and/or screening exercise?

Q45: On the basis of answers to Questions above (and in particular positive answers), do you recommend that the policy should be subjected to a full impact assessment?¹

Yes

No

Please elaborate

¹ Screening guidance states that considerations and decisions need to be formally recorded. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland may wish to examine the screening exercise at a later date. Please be aware that screening decisions and supporting documentation must be robust as under Freedom of Information this documentation can be released on request.

Please advise if you are content to have your response published should the Department receive such a request (see Appendix 1 on Freedom of Information Act). If you are not content to have your response published, please indicate your reasons to assist the Department in reaching decisions using the guidance attached at Appendix 1.

Please tick the relevant box

(i) Content

(ii) Not content

Please give reasons if not content:

Appendix 1

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATION

The Department will consider all responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. **Before** you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations which will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the DHSSPS should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the DHSSPS should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the DHSSPS of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see web site at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>).

For further information about this particular consultation please contact the consulting branch at:

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