

Boomer, Linda

From: jay mcmaster [jmcmaster@hotmail.co.uk]
Sent: 09 February 2007 19:41
To: Boomer, Linda
Subject: SAFEGUARDING BOARD CONSULATION COMMENTS

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
QUESTIONNAIRE JANUARY 2007

The Department of Health, Social Services and Pubic 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

Name: J.McMaster

Job Title: Social Worker

Email: jmcmaster@hotmail.co.uk

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?

NO. There should be a SB in each Trust to retain local focus.

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?

No, I would like to see a greater emphasis on the core function of safeguarding children at risk of suffering significant harm

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

Of children on the Child Protection Register - YES.

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

NO. Need to have realistic boundary to the remit to ensure delivery on aspirations.

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?

YES, provided that safeguards are established to protect confidentiality, respect private life of children and their parents and complies with Data Protection and FOI legislation.

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

YES

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?

YES

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

Excellent communication skills, credibility, personal and professional integrity, knowledge of children's legislation and wider legislative context. A champion for children.

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

Good education background ability to cut through jargon and to challenge special interests at all levels in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

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

YES

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?

YES

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

DON'T THINK IT WILL MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE - its personal and professional commitment to children's services which will make the difference. The law is a blunt instrument.

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?

NO. There is a risk that the SBNI will be removed from operation too much. Suggest need operational/practice input from different levels across interest groups.

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?

NO. See answer to Question 13.

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?

YES

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?

NO. These are too restricted. How can a member from one of the new Trusts commit all other Trusts - surely this is one of the issues which the proposal seeks to address.

Q17: Do you agree with the proposal for rolling membership of the

SBNI? If not, what alternative would you suggest?

YES

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?

YES

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

I don't accept that the structure, membership or potential role and responsibility of the SBNI will enable it to function effectively. Governance and accountability arrangements potentially are significantly compromised by the proposals in respect of the SBNI.

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?

NOT SURE . There are already a number of consultation groups for young people and linking with these rather than set up a new group would be more effective.

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?

Definitely not.

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

My preference is to use existing structures, however, if a Reference Group is to be established the idea of just one to include all interests and age ranges is unacceptable.

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

Several hundreds.

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

Totally independent of government or the SBNI.

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

This would not be an issue if existing groups were used or consultation website established.

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?

NO. Each should have a SB of its own. If a co-ordinating body is still desired this should be above this level rather than create SPs.

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

As stated do not accept the need for a SP, however, if still progressing with this idea then it should be fully representative of all interest relating to children in its area on a statutory, voluntary and community level across all age ranges.

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 purpose of each sub-group.

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

All the functions of ACPC sub-groups, Child Death Review, leisure and play facilities, housing, churches, sports, art, music, hospital, interfaces with adult services etc.

SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

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

As for existing Case Management Reviews

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

After the Coroner's Inquest and/or end of police/court hearings.

TIMESCALE

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

NO. When the legislation, regulations, guidance and policy are available to all staff, agencies etc.

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

Suggest in privately rented accommodation to ensure it is not compromised by any interest group.

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?

It is of concern that this is stated as a consultation question rather than transitional issues being raised within the proposals. It provides little assurance that matters have been well thought through.

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

NO. Only after all associated preparatory work is in place. See answer to question 32.

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?

BY having local SBs at Trust level.

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

There is no consideration of disabled children's needs in the proposals. The screening is not adequate to enable me to comment more widely on the other groups.

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

Yes, I would specifically raise the issue of disabled children.

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

Yes. There are issues regarding disabled children, minority ethnic groups and child in rural Northern Ireland.

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:

YES. Greater consideration is need in respect of a number of these groups especially disabled children in implementing this policy.

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.

As the screening is light it does not set the foundations upon which others can develop from it.

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

Please specify Yes disabled children and interests associated with them. Also rural interests.

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

Need for performance measures and monitoring of the SBNI to ensure it does not become a talking shop or grid lock development in operational organizations. Inspection arrangements and monitoring information on the SBNI itself is therefore required.

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

The screening has not been adequate and no human rights screening has taken place.

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?

Yes

Please elaborate I believe the policy has differential implications which have not been adequately addressed

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

Content

ADDITIONAL COMMENT

The e-consultation was withdrawn from the DHSSPS website on 9 February 2007 before the 9th ended - I regard this as an indication of how comments are likely to be taking into account.

Get Hotmail, News, Sport and Entertainment from MSN on your mobile.
<http://www.msn.txt4content.com/>