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Boomer, Linda

From: McCoy, Imelda [Imelda.McCoy@dhh.n-i.nhs.uk]
Sent: 08 February 2007 09:55
To: Boomer, Linda
Cc: McGrath, Martin; McKeown, Bronagh; Watt, Allison; Tony Rodgers (E-mail); Madeleine Irwin (E-mail)
Subject: NEWRY AND MOURNE TRUST/PANEL CONSULTATION RESPONSE - SAFEGURDING BOARD NI
Attachments: NM responseSBNIQuestions to answer.doc

Please find attached Newry and Mourne's response to above.

<<NM responseSBNIQuestions to answer.doc>>

--===PLEASE NOTE===-- Newry & Mourne Trust advise that this email, any attachment(s), and subsequent replies, may be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.



7 February 2007

**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT
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.

I am responding: on behalf of an organisation.

Name: J Flynn
Job Title: Director of Social Services/Chair, Newry and Mourne
Child Protection Panel

Organisation: Newry and Mourne HSS Trust/Newry and Mourne Child
Protection Panel

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5

7 February 2007

Consultation Response on behalf of Newry and Mourne Health and Social Services Trust and Newry and Mourne Child Protection Panel

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?

The proposal to develop a Regional Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland is welcomed. It is hoped this will lend consistency of approach across the entire region. However, there may be difficulty in ensuring there are strong and effective links between locality based operational services and this more strategic regional Board. This approach will only effectively serve children and families within Northern Ireland if local issues can be identified and addressed.

The statutory basis of the proposed Safeguarding Board is considered a significant step forward in respect of accountability and shared inter-agency working in relation to the needs of children.

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?

Given the broader perspective on safeguarding it will be important to ensure the needs of children who require protection are not diluted. There is also a need to ensure the needs of those within black and ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities have a strong representation within the safeguarding arena. A clear interface will need to be developed with strategic planning arrangements within the Children's Services Planning process.

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

The proposal to develop a single database for children deemed in need of protection is welcomed. Careful consideration will need to be given to how this is maintained, security arrangements, etc. However it would enhance safeguarding practices particularly in respect of those situations where children and families move within the small confines of Northern Ireland.

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

The suggested objectives are highly strategic and broad in their approach. The broader the objective the more open it is to interpretation across such a large area and range of agencies as to whether or not indeed it has been achieved. More specific and targeted objectives may lead to more effective measurement and indeed be more achievable and feasible.

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?

Establishment of a database is a complex issue. It would be important to ensure a strong interface is developed in respect of other initiatives which are ongoing in respect of information systems and requirements eg PCIS. In considering imposition of statutory powers there is a need to consider the learning from the experiences of trying to establish a register for children with disabilities within the requirements of the Children (NI) Order.

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?

It is accepted that the SBNI Chairman and lay members can be appointed through the public appointment process. It would however be essential to ensure that these are individuals with strong expertise and knowledge base in terms of child protection and broader childcare issues as well as a sound understanding of the structures for delivering services to children within Northern Ireland.

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?

While it is accepted that it is reasonable Chairperson, lay person etc should not serve more than two terms there is some concern that there is a risk that experience and knowledge will be lost if a number of members are to move on at the same time.

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

As per response to Q6 it is essential that the independent chairperson has extensive experience and knowledge in respect of child protection issues and the broader childcare arena. This should be within statutory social services/Trusts as well as a knowledge base of voluntary sector. It is essential they will have a proven expertise and commitment to inter-agency, multi-disciplinary working and a clear focus on the needs of children and families. They must have a working knowledge and understanding of the structures for delivery of childcare and child protection services within Northern Ireland.

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

Lay members should have experience and knowledge of the range services and service delivery for children and child protection within Northern Ireland. They should have demonstrated a commitment to focusing on the needs of children and families and a track record in multi-disciplinary, inter-agency working.

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

It is essential that SBNI will have its own secretariat and budget in order to fulfil its functions.

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?

It is considered that the suggested membership across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors is appropriate to the functions of the SBNI.

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

It is considered that placing membership of the SBNI on a statutory basis would be one mechanism for effectively enhancing issues such as accountability and responsibility in respect of children's services within Northern Ireland. This is viewed as a positive development.

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?

It is entirely accepted that membership of the SBNI should be at a senior level within the representative agencies and organisations. It is essential that those who sit on SBNI have the capacity to influence and indeed lead their organisations in respect of childcare policy and initiatives. There must be clear two-way communication links between (and within) those agencies and SBNI and subsequently at a more operational and local level across the region. This places considerable responsibility on those who will represent their agencies at SBNI.

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?

As per response to Q13 above, only those in senior positions within agencies and organisations could fulfil the necessary statutory role on SBNI.

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?

It is entirely accepted that individual agencies must be held accountable in respect of co-operation and the promotion of the welfare of children. This should be one fundamental role of the establishment of SBNI and is a welcome development in terms of effectively meeting the needs of children and families within Northern Ireland.

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?

There may need to be consideration in terms of how to engage the full range of district councils across Northern Ireland. It is assumed from the outline of membership on p.17 of the Consultation Paper that one representative of each professional grouping for HSS Trusts will be drawn from each RPA Trust across Northern Ireland. There was some concern that this may not be sufficient to ensure the local link necessary between HSS Trusts and SBNI. While accepting the need to have a manageable membership of SBNI it is suggested that the Chairpersons of local Safeguarding Panels within each Trust area should also be members of SBNI.

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

When considering the issue of “rolling” membership it will be important to ensure that no significant number of members will be moving on from SBNI at any one point in time. Otherwise this will result in a significant loss of professional expertise and knowledge.

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?

It seems entirely acceptable that membership should be reviewed no later than every four years with scope to consider earlier should the situation require this.

Q19: What other expertise do you consider appropriate for the SBNI to utilise in order to discharge its functions effectively?
YOUNG PERSON'S REFERENCE GROUP

Newry and Mourne Trust and Child Protection Panel would once again wish to stress the importance of a level of expertise in respect of children in need of safeguarding and those within the Looked After arena. While representing only a small number of children with Northern Ireland these are groups with complex needs which must receive careful consideration within the work of SBNI. There must also be expertise in respect of children with disabilities and those from black and ethnic minority groups.

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

The establishment of a Young Person's Reference Group is welcomed. Indeed it was also suggested that there may need to be a similar reference group in respect of parents or carers given that their interface within the scope of SBNI will differ from that of children and young people.

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?

The link between the Young Person's Reference Group and SBNI could be delivered via the Chairman's role. However consideration could also be given to this link being provided through another designated member of SBNI.

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

With experienced adult and peer group facilitators it should be possible to draw views and opinions from children from pre school stage upwards, accepting the age and developmental stage.

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

It is suggested guidance should be taken in respect of this matter from those with previous experience of leading consultations directly with children and young people, eg NICCY or VOYPIC.

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

It is suggested guidance should be taken in respect of this matter from those with previous experience of leading consultations directly with children and young people, eg NICCY or VOYPIC.

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

It is suggested guidance should be taken in respect of this matter from those with previous experience of leading consultations directly with children and young people, eg NICCY or VOYPIC.

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?

The proposal to establish a Safeguarding Panel in each of the five new Trust areas is welcomed. It will be important to ensure that there are strong links between local Safeguarding Panels who will have a more operational role and SBNI. Such Panels should be represented via their Chairperson on SBNI to strengthen these links. They should also be appropriately funded to carry out their tasks.

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

Local Safeguarding Panel membership could replicate membership within existing Child Protection Panels which are drawn from relevant and key agencies at statutory, voluntary and community sector within Trust areas. This would effectively retain the more local approach necessary to ensure local operationalisation of SBNI functions.

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

Without a more detailed structure in respect of sub-groups both at SBNI and Safeguarding Panel level it is difficult to be specific about sub-group membership. Clearly membership of sub-groups is likely to be drawn from constituent members of Safeguarding Panels with the option to co-opt onto sub-groups other key individuals dependent on the task being taken forward at any given point in time.

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

Consideration could be given to the following functions being carried out via sub-groups of Safeguarding Panels:

Serious Case Reviews
Policy and Procedures
Training
Governance and Audit
Service users interface, etc.

SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

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

Within this consultation document criteria for undertaking a Serious Case Review appears to be much broader than that already in existence. This may require further consideration and more specific definition. Such a broad approach would considerably increase the

number of Serious Case Reviews being conducted within Northern Ireland.

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

Consideration should be given to reviewing Case Management Reviews which have taken place within Northern Ireland in the period since the implementation of Co-operating to Safeguard Children. This will give a clear indication of how long Case Management Reviews are taking to complete at present and that combined with guidance from experience in England in respect of completion of Serious Case Reviews may provide a feasible timeframe for completion of Serious Case Reviews.

TIMESCALE

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

Undoubtedly the proposed timeframe represents a significant challenge to effectively establish SBNI and Safeguarding Panels and to transfer arrangements and stand down existing systems. Nonetheless it is important to move forward with this change with some speed given the establishment of new Trusts under RPA. It is hoped that in making this transition existing Child Protection Panels will be kept fully up-to-date with the changing arrangements and there will be an acknowledgement of the important role they have played to date in services to protect vulnerable children.

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

Given the multi-disciplinary statutory nature of SBNI there is an argument for locating this body within the HSS arena. However this should not in any way dilute the inter-agency function of the work which SBNI will undertake.

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 important that there will be effective communication throughout the period of transition and in respect of transfer of functions from ACPCs to SBNI. Child Protection Panels have played a key role to inter-agency working in child protection over the years, hence this should be acknowledged within any transition and communication arrangements

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

Response as per Q32.

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?

It is suggested there will need to be considerable work conducted with stakeholders in respect of the statutory nature of SBNI as well as the much broader scope and approach this development marks. This will require to take place at a regional strategic level and should be replicated at a more local level with an SBNI lead. The forthcoming changes should be accompanied by press coverage for the general public and possible leaflets which explain the broader role. It is important that this will be user friendly.

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

No comment.

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

No additional comments beyond main text of this response.

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

No comment.

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?

No comment.

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.

No comment.

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

No comment.

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

No comment.

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

No comment.

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?

No comment.

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**

Additional Comment re para 8.1, p.21.

There was some concern expressed about the development of policies and procedures resting with Childcare Policy Directorate of DHSS&PS. It is considered that this would separate out fundamental aspects of those areas for which SBNI are responsible, divorcing these from SBNI and placing them within a Health and Social Services context. It may also weaken the links between development of such policies and the practice knowledge which would be present at Safeguarding Panel level. In addition capacity to influence such policies particularly on an inter-agency basis may be limited where they are drafted within a statutory HSS sector. Development of such policies and procedures should be headed up by the Chair of SBNI or constituted inter-agency sub-group linked to SBNI directly.