

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE MUNRO REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION: 'A CHILD-CENTRED SYSTEM'

A Personal Message from the Minister, Tim Loughton, MP

Few things are more important than keeping children safe. That's why one of the very first things we did when we took office last year, was to ask Professor Eileen Munro to look at whether we are getting child protection right.

Some of you will know that Professor Munro completed her review earlier this year. You may also have read the *Young Persons' Guide to the Munro Review of Child Protection*, which was produced by the Office of the Children's Rights Director this summer (see *young people's guide at: <https://www.rights4me.org>*.)

Professor Munro's report talks about the problems experienced by children and young people who have suffered, or are suffering, harm and how important it is that they get the right help. It also describes the problems there are in the child protection system and how sometimes, despite trying their hardest, social workers and other professionals are up against a system that simply doesn't help them to do what is best for children.

Professor Munro made recommendations to the Government about ways to change this. We listened carefully and asked social workers, police, doctors and teachers to tell us how we could make the recommendations a reality. After listening to their views, we published a response to Professor Munro's report, saying how Government would help to make these changes. This Guide explains what we are going to do and I am pleased to be able to tell you that this work has already started.

I wanted to introduce this Young Persons' Guide because the views of children and young people played a big part in the review. Many of you gave honest views and personal opinions about what is wrong with the child protection system, how it affected you and how it can be improved. These views are incredibly valuable. Professor Munro called her report *A child-centred system*, making clear that the most important thing was for professionals to focus on helping children and young people.

Now work on making these important changes has begun, I wanted to share some of the ways views given by children and young people to Professor Munro have influenced changes that are being made.

One of the messages young people with experiences of being in care gave Professor Munro, was that too many decisions about their lives had to be made at too high a level in children's services. For the simple, every day things, young people want their social workers and carers to be able to make decisions in the same way that a parent would. This reinforced Professor Munro's view that professionals need more freedom to use their judgment and that Government should reduce the amount of rules it asks local areas to follow. Because of this, we are already working with professionals to work out what rules we have to keep so that everyone knows exactly what they have to do, and what rules have not been about helping children, so we can get rid of them.

By next summer, we will have a new, much smaller set of rules and local areas will

have more freedom to decide how they do things. It will be up to local areas to decide how they run things, but Government is sending a clear message that we think professionals should have more scope to decide what is sensible, with fewer procedures to follow.

Of course, it is also really important that there are enough skilled professionals to help children and young people and that they are properly trained and supported. The Government agrees with Professor Munro that we need to improve the education and training social workers receive and help them to continue learning throughout their careers, so that they have the right skills and experience to do the best they can for children, young people and families. We will also be appointing an independent Chief Social Worker, to help Government understand what issues social workers face and how we can help them in their day to day work with children and young people.

Children and young people also sent Professor Munro a clear message that they do not always feel listened to. Professor Munro believes that children and young people's views should always be taken into account in decisions that affect them. She recommended that one way to tackle this is for inspectors to look, when they are judging how good services are, at whether children and young people feel their views have been taken into account.

The Government agrees that the experiences of children and young people should be at the centre of inspection work and Ofsted (who carry out inspections) have asked professionals for views on the best ways to find out this information. They have also asked how best to judge how useful the help given to young people has been at all stages, and how long it took to get this help. We are working towards the new way of inspection being ready next May.

Changing the system is a big challenge, which unfortunately cannot happen over night. And of course, it is not one for Government alone. Just as Professor Munro worked with professionals to decide what changes should be made, so will we work closely with them so that we are confident changes will actually work in day to day life.

Children and young people too are a key part of the solution. We have asked the Office of the Children's Rights Director how best we can make sure the changes happening are what children and young people want to see. In the new year, we would like to check back with you to see if what we are doing is on the right track and to ask for your views on any problems we are still trying to resolve.

Our aim here is to create lasting improvements that will help and inspire professionals to do their best for vulnerable children and their families. We want to support all those working in, or responsible for, the child protection system who themselves will know only too well that, *if it isn't working for children then it isn't working at all.*

Tim Loughton MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

What is wrong with the child protection system and how can we improve it?

Professor Munro's challenge to us all is for a child protection system that puts the child first. This means:

- **the child or young person**, their wishes, feelings, and experiences **being at the centre of everything we do**;
- making sure that children, young people and their families are getting effective, quality help **at the time when they need it**;
- the range of help and services **matching different needs**;
- **trusting professionals** to make the right decisions for children, young people and their families - letting the experts get on with the job;
- **improving expertise** (*that means what we know about what it takes to keep children safe*) to help professionals work better for children, young people and their families;
- **really listening to children, young people and families**; and
- learning from **mistakes** as well as from successes.

Professor Munro believes that our child protection system should be based upon the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC). It recognises that children and young people have rights. These include:

- **the right to take part in decisions** affecting their lives (Article 12); and
- **the right to protection from abuse and harmful treatment** (Article 19).

She called for a child protection system that reacts quickly and effectively when things go wrong. But also, one that tries to prevent harmful things happening to children in the first place.

Putting children and young people at the centre means **different services** (*like local authority children's services, social work, education, police, health, early years services and voluntary organisations*) **working better together**. In order to get most out of what each of them have got (*that is their resources, things like money, staff, and buildings*), it will be more important than ever for them to work with each other.

Professor Munro believes that, if local services are to improve things for children and young people, the following changes are needed.

- Changes to health services so that when doctors, nurses and other health professionals come into contact with children and young people, they are

better at noticing when something is wrong and at knowing the best way to help them;

- Changes to early years services (*like Sure Start, pre-school and nurseries*) to help children in greatest need get help as early as possible.
- Changes to education, so that schools get better at noticing when something is wrong and knowing the best way to help the child or young person. There should still be someone in school children and young people can go to with any problems.
- Changes to the way the police work to give a new focus on tackling child sexual exploitation; educating children and their carers on how to protect themselves online; and on missing children issues.
- Changes to the family justice system will be key to keeping children safe and helping to reduce the amount of time children and young people have to wait before they know what will happen to them when they may be taken into care. Another review (the Family Justice Review) is looking at how the family justice system can be changed to work better for children and families.
- Local areas have been asked to look at how they organise their social work services so that they focus more on giving children and young people the right help and less time doing the bits of paperwork that don't actually help them
- The Social Work Reform Board and The College of Social Work will continue to lead improvements to social work (*through better training; professional development and careers*).

Recommendations and the Government Response

Recommendation 1: The Government should change its guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, and *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* to:

- **make clear** the difference between **essential rules** for effective working together, and **guidance to help professionals** when they are making important decisions;
- **give social workers more freedom to decide the best way to assess what help a child or young person needs to help keep them safe;**
- **require local areas to give attention to:**
 - how quickly they identify children's needs and get help to them;
 - how assessments help to decide on what best to do for children; and
 - whether the help given has made things better for children;
- **make local areas responsible for learning** from research and new ideas; and
- **allow local areas the freedom to do more things their own way.** In future, professionals will be under less pressure to have to do things the way that has been decided for them by government (*such as the forms they have to use, targets they have to meet and IT systems they have to share*).

What Professor Munro said

There is too much paperwork, and too many rules setting down what professionals have to do. These need to be reduced. This will help professionals, like social workers, move away from following everything that a procedure says. Instead, they need to be free:

- to be able to think for themselves;
- to be able to change and adapt to what they learn;
- to be able to focus on the needs of children and young people;
- to spend more time with children to understand them; and
- to provide the right help.

Their work with children, young people and their families must be informed by learning from research and new ideas.

At the moment, there is too much focus on social workers and other professionals meeting rigid targets set by Government, and not enough scope for them to make sensible decisions about the best ways to do things.

How the Government responded

Accept - The Government accepts the need for a better balance between professional judgment and simply following rules. The purpose of assessment is to understand the needs of children, young people and families. It should be a tool to provide timely and effective help to keep children safe. But, **doing assessments has moved the focus away from providing help - to doing assessments!**

Action - Government is changing the statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*, by summer 2012. This will reflect Professor Munro's recommendations for **good assessments**, so that they **are timely, of good quality and effective** in offering help. Inspection will be used to see that these changes happen. A young people's guide to this statutory guidance will also be produced.

However, the Government has decided some important changes (*such as to timescales and, removing the differences between initial/core assessments*) are needed sooner. So these will be brought in by December 2011.

Recommendation 2: Inspection of child protection should look at what all local services do, and how well, to keep children safe (*including children's services, health, education, police, probation, and the justice system*).

What Professor Munro said

The report puts children at the centre of what we do to keep them safe. This includes looking at all agencies involved in helping keep children safe. **Services should be judged** not just on whether they have followed the right procedures but on how much

their actions **improve things for children**.

This recommendation says how important early help is in keeping children safe. It also says that someone independent is needed to challenge how effective the help given is. Professor Munro's report also wants **inspections to be unannounced** (*meaning that services should not be told when they are about to be inspected*).

How the Government responded

Accept - The Government accepts that inspection needs to take a look at what all local services do to keep children safe. It also agrees that inspections should not be announced in advance.

Action - **Ofsted** (*the people who inspect children's services*) are currently **getting views on how they should inspect** children's services.

At the same time, new laws are being passed (*through the Education Bill*) to change school inspections. Showing what **schools are doing to help keep children safe will still be a part of inspection** for schools.

Work is also going on to see how different inspectorates (*like for education, health, and the police*) could work together, so they can see a bigger picture of **what different services are doing to help keep children safe**.

Recommendation 3: Inspection of child protection should look at what actually happens for the child on their journey from needing help to receiving it. It should look at how their rights, wishes, feelings and experiences are used to inform what help and services they are get, and whether what is provided to children, young people, and their families is helping to keep children safe.

What Professor Munro said

This recommendation is at the heart of a system centred on the child, and calls for effective help to be given to children. Introducing more procedures (*like form-filling, assessments and meetings*) will not give children and young people the help they need.

How the Government responded

Accept - The Government agrees that the experiences of children and young people should be at the centre of inspection work. Inspectors need to judge the quality and timeliness of responses to children in need. And, they must look at the effectiveness of help given at all stages (*including initial contact, early help, and protection; and in the longer term*).

Action - Ofsted are looking to have new changes to how they inspect children's services in place by May next year.

Recommendation 4: Local authorities and agencies that work with them should look at the local and national information that is collected about services, to help them see how well they are doing and what they need to do differently. It is important that information is not just used to show what is good or bad performance, but also helps services improve and be more accountable.

What Professor Munro said

Services have been concerned with looking for evidence of good or bad practice. Most measures say quite a lot about whether procedures are being followed correctly. However, they do not say enough about what is happening in children's lives.

Accept - The Government agrees that information should be used to tell services how they are performing. Information should be used locally to challenge, and help improve how services work with children and young people. The Government and some of its partners are already looking at how to help services identify the information they need to plan better what they do.

Action – Government is working closely with local services to help them find measures to use to show how well they are doing. For example, they may look at how many young people social workers have worked with, how many of these have gone on to receive some help, and whether the young person thought this had been useful). Government will also make a new list of the information that it wants to collect nationally, by May 2012.

Recommendation 5: Instead of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (*boards made up of senior people from the organisations that have responsibilities for helping to keep children and young people safe in an area, also referred to as LSCBs*) having to write an annual report for the Children's Trust Board, they should submit this instead to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, and, (*if the necessary legislation is passed*), to the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

What Professor Munro said

LSCBs are well placed to see how professionals and services are working together to keep children safe. They should also be looking in more depth at what is happening locally so they can identify challenges and say where improvement and development are needed.

This recommendation was made to try to make sure that all services are accountable for what they do for children. It was also made to give keeping children safe priority in the face of changing public services.

How the Government responded

Accept - LSCBs have an important role. The Government agrees that they should have more impact. **Accountability for keeping children safe must start from the very**

top. So, having LSCBs report each year to local leaders in the council, the police and health services is one way of making this happen.

Action - The Government will look for an opportunity to change the law saying who LSCBs should submit their reports to as soon as it can.

Recommendation 6: Guidance (*Working Together to Safeguard Children*) should be changed to say that when looking at arrangements to meet local needs, LSCBs should find out how effective the help being given to children and families has been (*including whether things like early help and early years services have made a difference and given value for money*). They should also look to see what training between different professionals and agencies has done to help them safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in their area.

What Professor Munro said

This recommendation makes the role of LSCBs much stronger. It will help them check whether different services, working to help children and families, are being effective. The role of the LSCB in helping to provide training to professionals from the different services that need to work together is also important.

How the Government responded

Accept in principle - The Government strongly agrees that **LSCBs are key to local arrangements for keeping children and young people safe**. They are in a good position to be able to tell how well local help and protection services are doing. It is important that this role is strengthened.

Action – Government will be saying what changes it is making to the role of LSCBs, in updated *Working Together* guidance, by December 2011.

We will work closely with LSCBs and other organisations to help them find best ways of checking how services are doing. We will also look at how LSCBs can best check what services (*like health, schools, early years settings, and adult services*) are doing to provide early help to children and families. The Government will also see what can be done to help local partners share training resources.

Finally, the Government will also consider how far LSCBs should be looking at whether there are any special places (*such as detention centres, young offender institutions, ports or airports, or refuges*) that need particular services for keeping children safe.

Recommendation 7: Local authorities should consider keeping the roles of a Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services to help meet the needs of local children. The Director of Children's Services, or DCS, is a senior person employed by the local authority who is accountable for the protection of children in their area. The Lead Member is an elected person (*a local Councillor*) who is also accountable for the protection of children in their area. Professor Munro believes that

the importance of the DCS and Lead Member having specific responsibilities for children's services should not be undermined. She has asked local areas to think carefully about protecting these roles and believes that they should not be given responsibilities other than children's services, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

What Professor Munro said

Professor Munro does not want leaders of children's services to become distracted by having other local services that they are responsible for. Changes to children's services make the role of a local leader with clear responsibilities for children especially important while changes are being made to the child protection system. The review, therefore, called for Directors of Children's Services to only be given other duties in exceptional circumstances.

How the Government responded

Accept in principle - The Government agrees that the role and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member are of great importance. They give local leadership to children's services. People, at local level, need to be clear on who is responsible for doing what. The Government will, therefore, keep the legal requirement for local authorities to have Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services.

The Department for Education is working with local government to produce guidance on the role of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member. It is likely that it will say that **any additional responsibilities given to Directors of Children's Services should not get in the way of them doing what they need to do for children**. Local arrangements for what a Director of Children's Services is responsible for should be inspected by Ofsted.

Action – The Government is now asking for views on the guidance.

Recommendation 8: Government should work with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Royal College of General Practitioners, local authorities and others to look into what might happen as changes are made to the way health services are organised. They will need to make sure that health professionals such as doctors and nurses are still able to provide effective help for children at risk of significant harm.

What Professor Munro said

Future changes to local health services could confuse responsibility for keeping children safe. This recommendation aims to help professionals to take any difficulties that arise into account.

How the Government responded

Accept in principle - The Government accepts this recommendation, but wants to go further. It wants to work with the NHS, local authorities and professionals to produce

an agreed work programme. This will include:

- understanding what each does and who is responsible for doing it;
- making sure that there is professional leadership and expertise for keeping children safe;
- making sure that LSCBs and health and wellbeing boards work together (*health and wellbeing boards are made up of local councillors and the people in local areas who are in charge of planning the services that are needed locally to support people's health and social care needs*);
- the development of groups for buying in health services;
- what the NHS does to provide early help;
- training in safeguarding and child protection;
- looking at how changes to inspection will affect the NHS; and
- looking at what we can learn from ways the health sector learns from and improves patient safety.

Action – The Department of Health and the Department for Education are working with NHS bodies, local authorities, professional bodies and practitioners on a joint programme of work. This will be published in the autumn of 2011.

Recommendation 9: The Government should require LSCBs to use methods based upon 'systems theory' (*see page 12 of the Young Person's Guide to the Munro Review of Child Protection*) when doing Serious Case Reviews (*these are carried out when a child dies or is injured and it is suspected that abuse or neglect played a part in their death or injury*). Over the coming year, work should be done with those working with children and young people to develop national resources to:

- provide skilled, independent people to work with LSCBs on each Serious Case Review;
- develop tools for learning from practice;
- begin to develop an understanding of why things may go wrong and learn from this; and
- sharing what has been learnt to improve practice around the country and inform the work of the Chief Social Worker (see recommendation 15).

What Professor Munro said

The recommendation is intended **to improve how Serious Case Reviews (SCR) are carried out**. Professor Munro wants them to:

- **be more useful** to those working in child protection
- **have wider implications** for learning across the whole child protection system, and
- **be more consistent** in how their findings are presented.

Serious Case Reviews should be able to explain not only what happened, but also why it happened. Simply blaming individuals for errors and mistakes does little to help us learn or improve from all the other things that may have gone wrong.

'Systems theory' approaches let us to take a look at the whole child protection system - not just errors, but also what works well.

How the Government responded

Consider further - The Government agrees that 'systems approaches' should be used by LSCBs when Serious Case Reviews are carried out. Also, there should be expert 'reviewers' to work independently to help LSCBs use this new methodology. These reviewers would also be able to help with learning across the country.

But these approaches are still untested. We would like to see how they work out before committing fully to their use. Pilot work is being done to test out these new approaches.

The Government will further consider this recommendation when it is better able to say:

- which organisation(s) would recruit the 'reviewers', and be responsible for their work
- who the 'reviewers' would be accountable to
- what resources would be needed

The Government accepts that the current way of judging the quality of Serious Case Reviews should come to an end. But, it is important to plan carefully any move to new arrangements.

Action – Government is working with local experts to look at different ways of carrying out Serious Case Reviews and for developing the other resources Professor Munro has recommended. The Government is also looking further at how to change the way they judge how effective and useful a Serious Case Review has been, by focusing more on learning lessons.

Recommendation 10: The Government should require local authorities and agencies that work with them to provide enough local early help services for children, young people and families. The arrangements for how they will do this should:

- say the range of help available to local children, young people and families, through statutory, voluntary and community services;
- say how they will tell if children are at risk of significant harm (*including how social workers will be available to other professionals working with children,*

young people and families not being supported by children's social care services).

- say what training is available to support local professionals working in frontline services (*that is with children, young people and families*);
- say how they will make enough local resources available for the early help services that many children, young people and families will need; and,
- identify the early help that is needed by a particular child and their family (*including an early offer of help even where their needs do not meet the criteria for receiving children's social care services*).

What Professor Munro said

Services to prevent harm do more to reduce abuse and neglect than services that only react after abuse and neglect has occurred. To help avoid confusion and meet local need, services need to be better co-ordinated (*this means being clearer about who does what*).

If local services are to provide enough services to prevent harm, they need to have a better idea of how much need there is in their area and to know what each of the other services that help children can offer. They also need to speak more to one another to help them make the right decisions about, for example, when to refer a child to social care services and feel confident that they have made the right decision. Expert advice can help other professionals to make better decisions about what is safe for a child, and what is too dangerous.

This recommendation is also designed to help local services share the responsibility for giving help to families who need it. Not all will be involved with children's social care. The review found that giving early help often means making an assessment, with little direct help. This can mean problems get worse and even more help is needed. An offer of help, when harm is first identified, can be more important than getting an assessment done.

How the Government responded

Accept in principle - The Government recognises **the State's duty to protect children from abuse** and help to prevent it happening in the first place.

The Government also agrees that from the child's point of view, **it is always best that they get help before further harm is caused** to them. This means encouraging those working with children to create **an environment where children feel safe, know where to turn for help, and are able to speak out**. Professionals working with children also need to be more confident about referring children they are concerned about to skilled social workers.

Government believes that being clearer about the help that is available will make local arrangements to help families early more open. In making these local arrangements, there should be:

- enough services giving early help for local need;
- arrangements to identify children who are suffering, or likely to suffer harm;
- access to child protection social work expertise for other professionals;
- the training available for those professionals providing early help;
- the resources needed to provide early help;
- an 'early help offer' made to individual children and families.

Action – Government is looking for the best ways of making sure there is early help, and will say what these are in autumn 2011. It is hoped that the 'early help offers' will be in place locally from May 2012.

The Government is now considering how best to achieve this. And, whether any new laws will be needed to make sure children and families get the early help they need. The Government is also looking what at any changes in health might mean for early services. And, what services like Sure Start Children's Centres, other early years settings, Health Visitors and schools can also do to get early help to children and families.

Recommendation 11: The training and supervision of social workers should be clear about the capabilities needed for social work with children, young people and families.

What Professor Munro said

This recommendation supports the work of the Social Work Reform Board to bring **further expertise in social work**. Its aim is to improve the quality of help and support that is given to children and families.

Professor Munro recommends what skills people working in child protection and with families will need.

How the Government responded

Accept - The Government agrees that we need to be clearer about the skills needed by social workers. Work is being done on this.

Action – The Social Work Reform Board has already made a start on what will be needed to improve social workers' skills. The College of Social Work is expected to implement changes to social work learning and development by autumn 2012.

Recommendation 12: Employers and higher education institutions (colleges and universities) should work together so that social work students are prepared for the challenges of child protection work. The review thinks that they should work together so that:

- training placements for social work students are of the highest quality;
- employers can get special status that allows them to teach social work students – 'teaching organisation' status ;
- the idea of 'student units', which are headed up by a senior social worker, are considered; and

- employers and colleges/universities look at whether placements are of the highest quality, and how well their relationship is working.

What Professor Munro said

Social workers often qualify without the necessary knowledge and experience to meet the challenges of child and family social work. This is because **there is a failure to make sure that what is taught actually matches the realities of social work practice**. Not all degree courses are good enough. Some offer only poor content about child development and attachment theory (*this describes how long-term relationships are formed*).

The Social Work Task Force had identified where education and training needed urgent attention. And, the Social Work Reform Board continues to work with employers and colleges/universities to help them give priority to improving the teaching of social work students.

How the Government responded

Accept - The Government agrees that partnership between employers and universities/colleges is the key to good social work education. This includes good placements that set the highest standards in social work.

Work is going on to make sure that social work students are equipped to deal with the challenges of child protection work.

- The Social Work Reform Board is working with colleges and universities to get better entrants into social work; and improve on the quality of the education they receive.
- Government is looking at the benefits of new models of social work education. 'Step Up to Social Work' is one such scheme, led by employers.
- Government will be keeping a watch on the range of qualifying routes into social work, and to make sure that there are always enough social workers of the right quality.

Employers have a major role to play. The Government needs to know that they will take their responsibility for the training of social workers seriously. This means making good placements available. It is likely that this will take some time, and some authorities will find this more challenging than others. But the Social Work Reform Board has models to help build partnerships. These are already being tested in some areas. New partnership solutions will be key to success.

Government already gives support for social work placements through grants. The College of Social Work has been asked to come up with ideas for how to make best use of this resource. A consultation is also underway on improving practice placements. The College of Social Work is well placed to look the recommendation for 'teaching organisation status'.

Action – Employers and Higher Education Institutions (*colleges and universities*) are to

have partnership arrangements in place by the end of 2012.
The College of Social Work will develop plans for approving student practice placements and 'teaching organisation' status by 2012

Recommendation 13: Local authorities, and agencies that work with them, should start to look at and change, if necessary, the ways in which child and family social work is delivered. They should rely on evidence of what works to support better ways of working with children and families.

What Professor Munro said

Less direction from government means that local leaders need to create their own systems for improving the quality of help they give to vulnerable children and families. Involving children, young people and families in this will be critical.

Local managers need to support their staff so that they can spend most of their time working with children and families.

How the Government responded

Accept - The Government accepts that **social work needs to change**. This is already happening in a number of areas.

Attention should be given to creating conditions that value relationships with families. Social work must be about making a real difference to people's lives. Processes should be limited to those that actually help front line practice.

It is up to individual local authorities to have services in place that are effective. In designing these, **they should take account of the views of service users**.

Changes to inspection will focus on how well local authorities are doing at providing help and services to children and families.

Action – Local authorities will assess how well they are doing, taking account of the views of children, young people and families who use their services. The Department for Education is working with the Children's Improvement Board (*made up of people from local councils who share good ideas and challenge each other to improve the services they offer to children*) to produce tools to help local authorities do this. Improvements to the way child and family social work is delivered should be kept continually under review

Recommendation 14: Local authorities should have a named Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice. They should still be involved in frontline practice themselves, so that they can report the views and experiences of front line staff working with children, young people and families to all levels of management.

What Professor Munro said

Managers need to make decisions about budgets and resources. But this can sometimes mean that they are not always in touch with the effect of those decisions in

practice. They need to understand better how their decisions affect the lives of children and families. The role of the Principal Child and Family Social Worker is intended to give a voice for social workers. This is an important part of making the system open to feedback and change.

How the Government responded

Accept - Government accepts the need for a clear link between management and practice. It sees the new role of Principal Child and Family Social Worker as helping the system become more responsive to the needs of children and families and . And, make it more open to their views.

Local authorities won't have to create any new posts. If they wish, they can name an existing social worker as the Principal Child and Family Social Worker. Strong leadership in child protection work is key to improvements government would like to see. This is already happening in some areas. We think that it may also prove helpful in voluntary and private organisations working with children and families.

At national level, The College of Social Work will have a role in putting forward the views of social workers (*including Principal Child and Family Social Workers*) to the Chief Social Worker.

Action – Government is working with local authorities and professionals, to look at how to get Principal Child and Family Social Workers in place early. We will also be looking at what role Principal Child and Family Social Workers should play in improving and challenging practice.

Our target is for most local authorities to have a Principal Child and Family Social Worker by April 2012 and for all to have one by July 2012.

Government will consider asking The College of Social Work to work with the Social Work Reform Board to provide a guide (*for Local Authority, voluntary and private sector employers*) on the appointment of Principal Child and Family Social Workers.

Recommendation 15: Government should appoint a Chief Social Worker to advise on social work practice (and report to the Secretary of State and Parliament each year on the working of the Children Act 1989).

What Professor Munro said

As well as changes locally, there needs to be learning at a national level. The review looked at how this is done in other Government Departments and in other countries. They concluded that the system would benefit from having a Chief Social Worker. The review thinks this appointment will help Government understand how its policies and procedures affect frontline practice. The role of Chief Social Worker would be as an independent adviser to government, not linked or attached to any other body or organisation.

How the Government responded

Accept in principle - The Government accepts the need for a Chief Social Worker (CSW) to provide a key voice for social work within Government. The post will cover both children and adult social care. The Chief Social Worker will therefore report to both the Secretaries of State for Education and for Health.

There are details of the Chief Social Worker's role that still need to be worked out include:

- What the Chief Social Worker will do
- What links they should have with other bodies (including the College of Social Work); and
- How they would work with Government, and in which Department they would be based in.

Action – A Chief Social Worker will be in post by late 2012.