

## Summary of recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Government should revise both the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children and The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families and their associated policies to:

- distinguish the rules that are essential for effective working together, from guidance that informs professional judgment;
- set out the key principles underpinning the guidance;
- remove the distinction between initial and core assessments and the associated timescales in respect of these assessments, replacing them with the decisions that are required to be made by qualified Social Workers when developing an understanding of children's needs and making and implementing a plan to safeguard and promote their welfare;
- require local attention is given to:
  - timeliness in the identification of children's needs and provision of help;
  - the quality of the assessment to inform next steps to safeguard and promote children's welfare; and
  - the effectiveness of the help provided;
- give local areas the responsibility to draw on research and theoretical models to inform local practice; and
- remove constraints to local innovation and professional judgment that are created by prescribing or endorsing particular approaches. For example, nationally designed assessment forms, national performance indicators associated with assessment or nationally prescribed approaches to IT systems.

**Recommendation 2:** The inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, including Health, Education, Police, Probation and the justice system to the protection of children.

**Recommendation 3:** The new inspection framework should examine the child's journey from needing to receiving help, explore how the rights, wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people inform and shape the provision of services, and look at the effectiveness of the help provided to children, young people and their families.

**Recommendation 4:** Local authorities and their partners should use a combination of nationally collected and locally published performance information to help benchmark performance, facilitate improvement and promote accountability. It is crucial that performance information is not treated as an unambiguous measure of good or bad performance, as performance indicators tend to be.

**Recommendation 5:** The existing statutory requirements for each Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to produce and publish an annual report for the Children's Trust Board should be amended, to require its submission instead to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, and, subject to the passage of legislation, to the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Recommendation 6:** The statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, should be amended to state that when monitoring and evaluating local arrangements, LSCBs should, taking account of local need, include an assessment of the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families – including the effectiveness and value for money of early help services, including early years provision – and the effectiveness of multi-agency training to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

**Recommendation 7:** Local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of a Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services before allocating any additional functions to individuals occupying such roles. The importance, as envisaged in the Children Act 2004, of appointing individuals to positions where they have specific responsibilities for Children's Services should not be undermined. The Government should amend the statutory guidance issued in relation to such roles and establish the principle that, given the importance of individuals in senior positions being responsible for Children's Services, it should not be considered appropriate to give additional functions (that do not relate to Children's Services) to Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

**Recommendation 8:** The Government should work collaboratively with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Royal College of General Practitioners, local authorities and others to research the impact of health reorganisation on effective partnership arrangements and the ability to provide effective help for children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

**Recommendation 9:** The Government should require LSCBs to use systems methodology when undertaking Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and, over the coming year, work with the sector to develop national resources to:

- provide accredited, skilled and independent reviewers to jointly work with LSCBs on each SCR;
- promote the development of a variety of systems-based methodologies to learn from practice;
- initiate the development of a typology of the problems that contribute to adverse outcomes to facilitate national learning; and
- disseminate learning nationally to improve practice and inform the work of the Chief Social Worker.

In the meantime, Ofsted's evaluation of SCRs should end.

**Recommendation 10:** The Government should place a duty on local authorities and statutory partners to secure the sufficient provision of local early help services for children, young people and families. The arrangements setting out how they will do this should:

- specify the range of professional help available to local children, young people and families, through statutory, voluntary and community services, against the local profile of need set out in the local Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA);
- specify how they will identify children who are suffering or who are likely to suffer significant harm, including the availability of social work expertise to all professionals working with children, young people and families who are not being supported by children's social care services and specify the training available locally to support professionals working at the frontline of universal services;
- set out the local resourcing of the early help services for children, young people and families; and, most importantly;
- lead to the identification of the early help that is needed by a particular child and their family, and to the provision of an "early help offer" where their needs do not meet the criteria for receiving children's social care services.

**Recommendation 11:** The Social Work Reform Board's Professional Capabilities Framework should incorporate capabilities necessary for child and family social work. This framework should explicitly inform social work qualification training, postgraduate professional development and performance appraisal.

**Recommendation 12:** Employers and higher education institutions (HEIs) should work together so that social work students are prepared for the challenges of child protection work. In particular, the review considers that HEIs and employing agencies should work together so that:

- practice placements are of the highest quality and – in time – only in designated Approved Practice Settings;
- employers are able to apply for special ‘teaching organisation’ status, awarded by the College of Social Work;
- the merits of ‘student units’, which are headed up by a Senior Social Worker are considered; and
- placements are of sufficiently high quality, and both employers and HEIs consider if their relationship is working well.

**Recommendation 13:** Local authorities and their partners should start an on-going process to review and redesign the ways in which child and family social work is delivered, drawing on evidence of effectiveness of helping methods where appropriate and supporting practice that can implement evidence based ways of working with children and families.

**Recommendation 14:** Local authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and who is still actively involved in frontline practice and who can report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management.

**Recommendation 15:** A Chief Social Worker should be created in Government, whose duties should include advising the Government on social work practice and informing the Secretary of State’s annual report to Parliament on the working of the Children Act 1989.