

Professor Munro Review

Briefing from Children England
June 2011

About Children England

Children England is the leading membership organisation for the children, young people and families' voluntary sector and the Department for Education's overarching strategic partner. With member organisations working in all parts of the country ranging from small local groups to the largest household names in children's charities, Children England is in a unique position to use the collective voice of the voluntary sector to achieve positive change for children. Children England provides capacity building, support and information to its members and the wide range of voluntary sector organisations working with children, young people and families. It does this by building active networks, promoting good practice, stimulating policy debate and ensuring that the issues that matter most to its members are taken up with decision makers.

Children England is committed to working alongside its members in the creation of a society where children and young people are valued, protected and listened to, their rights are realised and their families supported.

About This Briefing

This briefing is provided on behalf of the Department for Education's overarching strategic partnership which aims to support the evolving economy and infrastructure of the whole voluntary, community and social enterprise sector serving children, young people and families. It will also share the best practice, expertise, learning and concerns of the sector with the DfE.

Led by Children England, and working with Community Matters, NCVYS, NAVCA, The Race Equality Foundation and the Social Enterprise Coalition, the partnership will use its extensive combined member networks and stakeholder groups to shape and deliver activities with the sector, and gather the perspectives of thousands of organisations and community groups. The programme will include information, learning resources and opportunities, and peer support networks. The aims being to offer practical help to support the sector's sustainability and explore the potential for growth from a range of funding mechanisms and service models.

Introduction

This briefing contains a short summary of Professor Munro's first and second reports and a longer, chapter by chapter, summary of her final report, including its 15 principle recommendations. At the end of each chapter summary is a list of questions intended to stimulate thinking on the implications of the report for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSES) and how the VCSES might participate in its local implementation.

In June 2010 Professor Eileen Munro was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education to conduct a review of child protection in England. The review's first report of the evidence gathered, in October 2010, described a defensive system focussed on procedures rather practitioner expertise and identified four key drivers behind this system:

- 1) The importance of the safety and welfare of children and the strong reaction when a child is killed or seriously harmed
- 2) A commonly held belief that the complexity and associated uncertainty of child protection work can be eradicated
- 3) A readiness, in high profile public inquiries into the death of a child, to focus on professional error without looking deeply enough into its causes
- 4) A focus on performance indicators, targets and process rather than the quality and effectiveness of help given.

The second report in February 2011 considered the child's journey through the child protection system and concluded that instead of "doing things right" (i.e. following procedures) the system needed to be focused on doing the right thing (i.e. checking whether children and young people are being helped). The third and final report, *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report - A child-centred system*, published in May 2011, sets out a call for major culture change right across children's services and child protection, including 15 key recommendations aimed at ensuring that the system develops professional expertise and empowers practitioners to make the best judgements about the welfare of children and young people. These recommendations are underpinned by eight principles:

- 1) The system should be child-centred
- 2) The family is usually the best place for bringing up children and young people, but difficult judgements are sometimes needed in balancing the right of a child to be with their birth family with their right to protection from abuse and neglect
- 3) Helping children and families involves working with them and therefore the quality of the relationship between the children and family and professionals impacts on the effectiveness of help given
- 4) Early help is better for children
- 5) Children's needs and circumstances are varied so the system needs to offer equal variety in its response
- 6) Good professional practice is informed by knowledge of the latest theory and research
- 7) Uncertainty and risk are features of child protection work
- 8) The measure of the success of child protection systems, both local and national, is whether children are receiving effective help

A system that values professional expertise

This chapter identifies the bureaucratic burden placed on practitioners and managers as one of the principle deficiencies of the current system, stating that this has created a culture that is more focussed on compliance with guidance and performance management than providing suitable support to children, young people and families. The review concludes that this had led to services becoming so standardised that they are no longer able to respond to the variety of need that is presented and that this over reliance on following procedures has meant that insufficient attention has been paid to the expertise and skills required to make procedures work effectively, particularly in complex cases.

The review calls for a move from a compliance to a learning culture, where practitioners have the freedom to use professional expertise in assessing need and providing help. In order to facilitate this, it suggests revising statutory guidance to remove unnecessary prescription and focus on the principles of good practice. While acknowledging that current guidance is based on sound principles, Professor Munro believes that practice has been distorted by excessive bureaucracy. For example, a one size fits all approach to assessments means that many are disproportionately onerous, leading to unnecessary delays in the provision of help.

The review states that *Working Together* has become too large to be useful (it is 55 times longer than it was in 1974). It cites the addition of good practice to the guidance as contributing to the deprofessionalisation of child protection, with those working in the field feeling increasingly obliged to do things 'by the book' rather than using their professional judgment.

The chapter continues by calling for a similar reduction in the bureaucracy associated with inspections, reiterating the recommendation made in the second Professor Munro report that inspections should be unannounced. Professor Munro notes the damaging but false perception that inspectors are more focussed on compliance with procedures than the outcomes of children. She suggests that future inspections should be child-centred, focussed on the child's journey through the system and the quality of frontline practice. As child protection involves multiple agencies, the review also calls for separate inspectorates to work together more closely. Additionally, it suggests that external inspections should be augmented by the development of a sector-based improvement model that, over time, should enable formal inspections to become less intensive.

Finally, the report discusses the difficulty of reconciling the importance of performance data for assessing and managing services with the fact that collecting it can skew and misdirect local priorities. It suggests the use of a 'twin core' of data made up of information collected nationally and standardised data published locally. This 'twin core' of data – using a combination of timeliness data, quality of service information, outcomes measures and management information – should be used to provide context for discussions about the health of child protection services in local areas.

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.

Key questions for the VCSES to consider:

- What impact will removing statutory guidance have at a time when local authorities are making significant reductions to their budgets?
- How can the Government ensure that guidance isn’t removed before the child protection workforce is sufficiently well trained to effectively exercise professional judgement?

- How can the sector help to improve the timely identification of need and early help with other local partners?
- Should VCSES services be included in the list of those inspected within Recommendation 2

Clarifying accountabilities and improving learning

This chapter begins by acknowledging the difficulty of creating a system that enables professionals from a wide variety of agencies to work well together and identifies the development of clear lines of accountability as the key to the task. It notes that this is particularly important during this time of major public service reform and when increased localism will lead to local accountability structures varying significantly between different areas. It calls for the protection of the discrete roles of Director of Children's Services (DCS) and Lead Member for Children's Services and raises concerns that some local authorities are combining the DCS role with that of Director of Adult Services or splitting the DCS role between education and social care in order to save money.

The review notes the important role that LSCBs have to play in monitoring local arrangement and calls for a particular focus on the provision of multi-agency training, which it fears may be cut due to budgetary pressures. It also argues that LSCBs need to maintain good channels of communication with local authority leaders in order to be effective. To this end, DCSs and Lead Members for Children's Services should continue to sit on LSCBs and the annual report produced by LSCBs should be distributed to Police and Crime Commissioners and chairs of health and wellbeing boards.

Professor Munro endorses the Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage and states that any re-write of the EYFS should continue to require that there is a practitioner who is designated and takes a lead responsibility for safeguarding within all early years settings.

Lastly, the chapter analyses the strengths and weaknesses of serious case reviews (SCRs), noting that whilst they are good at determining what happened to a child, they are less effective at identifying why professionals acted as they did. It suggests that by apportioning blame and highlighting the breakdown of procedures, SCRs reinforce a more prescriptive approach but don't explore why professionals find it difficult to comply with certain procedures in the first place. The review recommends that the child welfare sector should adopt the systems approach used successfully by the health sector. This focuses on developing an understanding of why professionals have acted the way they have, so that any resulting changes are grounded in practice realities. This should be augmented by the development of a wider range of learning mechanisms to support multi-agency teams to become better at monitoring, assessing and adapting their practice. The review then sketches out how a systems approach would work based on the SCIE Learning Together Model. Professor Munro says that the successful introduction of such a system will require leadership from central government and a national training and accreditation programme for lead reviewers of SCRs and other case reviews.

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 (see chapter seven).

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

Key questions for the VCSES to consider:

- Are the existing accountability structures sufficiently robust to safeguard children during a time of major public service reforms?

- The review explores the changes being made to the health system, but what impact will reform of the schools system have on child protection?
- Do LSCBs have the resources and skills to properly monitor local arrangements, and in particular the adequacy of early help services?
- Has the systems methodology been tested sufficiently in child protection to be used for SCRs?

Sharing responsibility for the provision of early help

Professor Munro defines early help as that provided both early in the life of a child and early in the emergence of a problem. She identifies three principle arguments in favour of early intervention; the moral imperative to minimise suffering (which is endorsed by the UNCRC); it is easier to prevent damage than reverse it; and it is cost effective. The chapter provides a summary of the Allan, Field and Tickell reviews and endorses their findings. It also praises the early intervention policies implemented by the current and previous governments as well as the VCSES.

The review argues that coordination of early help services is important to maximise efficiency as savings resulting from early intervention often accrue to a different agency to the one intervening. It mentions the community budget pilots, which will see various statutory agencies pooling their budgets to support families with multiple problems, as a promising development. However, the report also expresses concern that early intervention budgets have been disproportionately cut by local authorities, citing Children England's members survey as evidence of this, and calls on local authorities and statutory partners to coordinate their services so as to avoid short sighted cuts in one area leading to increased costs in another.

Professor Munro suggests that local areas should have greater flexibility to make local decisions on revising the Common Assessment Framework form in order to reduce bureaucracy and empower practitioners.

Finally, the chapter discusses the difficulty of identifying neglect and abuse and therefore determining who requires early help. It argues that all professionals working closely with children, young people and families should have ready access to social work expertise in order to discuss concerns and establish whether a referral to children's social care is needed.

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.

Although welcoming the emphasis on and being fully supportive of early help for children young people and families, key questions for the VCSES to consider are:

- How will local authorities meet a new early help duty given that cuts have already been made to early intervention services?
- What has happened to statutory funding for VCSES early intervention projects in the local authority(s) where your organisation operates?
- How can localism be used to strengthen local arrangements, rather than dilute the rights of all children and young people to protection, wherever they live?

Developing social work expertise

Throughout the report, Professor Munro argues that increased prescription, while intended to improve practice, has had the opposite effect, reducing social workers expertise due to a reliance on following procedure rather than exercising professional judgement. This chapter sets out the knowledge and expertise that are needed and the steps required to develop them.

It endorses the work of the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) that is being implemented by the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) and hopes to build on it. It also sets out the historical development of social work qualifications and suggests that there are two reasons why these reforms have not led to widespread good practice. Firstly, there is a lack of consensus within the profession about the nature of social work expertise. Secondly, and importantly, there has been an inappropriate model of practice underpinning much of the reform with a relationship focussed practice model overtaken by a managerialist one. This has led to a reliance on process at the expense of professional judgement.

Professor Munro splits the required expertise for child and family social work into three sections: 1) relationship skills; 2) reasoning and emotions in relationship-based practice; and 3) using evidence. She believes that skills in forming relationships are fundamental to obtaining the information that helps social workers understand what problems a family has and to engaging the child and family and working with them to promote change. With respect to the second set of skills required, Professor Munro argues that the utility of intuitive reasoning is often underappreciated. While not all decisions should be based on gut feelings, unconscious reasoning can be made conscious if professionals are given space to reflect. Although intuitive judgements are vulnerable to bias, this can be corrected through critical challenge and supervision. With regard to using evidence, the review states that while social workers are good at using direct observation of children and families to inform their actions, they less regularly use evidence from research to inform their analysis of why any problems are happening or evidence on effectiveness to guide their plans on how to help solve the problems. It suggests that best practice will be achieved not by adopting a one size fits all approach to interventions but by training practitioners so that they have the expertise to use all three types of evidence to inform their decisions.

The review highlights the Professional Capabilities Framework developed by the SWRB and strongly endorses the capabilities on professionalism; values and ethics; diversity; rights, justice and economic wellbeing; contexts and organisations; and professional leadership. With regard to the three capabilities on knowledge, critical reflection and analysis, and intervention and skills, the review provides a minimum list of knowledge and skills that it believes should be required under each in order to be suitable for child and family social work.

The review notes that not all newly qualified social workers are emerging from degree courses with the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise; and they are especially unprepared to deal with the challenges posed by child protection work. It endorses the work being taken forward by the SWRB to improve the quality of newly qualified social workers and calls for investment in social work training. This will require investment but Professor Munro argues that the evidence shows that a more skilled workforce can save money in the long run by supporting children and young people to safely stay with their families.

Lastly, the review explores the reasons for court delays when applying for care orders and sets out the key factors determining effective practice from a local authority perspective in order to improve the journey for a child and young person through care proceedings.

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.

Key questions for the VCSES to consider:

- Will the recommendations on social work education support the ongoing involvement of the VCSES in placements and employment ?
- How will your organisation meet these challenges?
- What might improve the educational partnerships between VCSES employers and HEI’s?

The organisational context: supporting effective social work practice

Professor Munro acknowledges that less prescription will mean greater responsibility for local authority leaders. However, she states that in order for these reforms to be successful, leadership will have to be exercised at all levels, particularly as the majority of the bureaucracy that stifles practitioners is generated and maintained locally. She also highlights the role of managers in lessening the anxiety of social workers by moving from a blame culture to a learning one.

The review does not suggest a one size fits all solution. Rather, it argues that everyone must develop systems that prioritise the outcomes of children and families rather than the following of procedures and that these will inevitably look different in different areas. Professor Munro identifies the characteristics of an effective local system. These include a clear understanding of the capabilities required by staff, an operational structure and systems (practice and managerial) which enable all social workers to spend most of their time undertaking effective work that directly benefits children and families, a robust selection process for all staff in that structure and a clear view on what local regulation is absolutely necessary to enable social workers to do their jobs in a reflective way.

The review highlights the importance of ICT to social work practice, noting that many social workers have reported that their locally procured computer systems were substantial obstacles to good practice. It suggests a number of principles that local authorities should have regard to when procuring new software.

Professor Munro calls for services to be designed with the views of users and professionals in mind. To this end she proposes the creation of channels through which frontline practitioners can notify those in authority of how the current operational arrangements and other features of the practice system are affecting their work with children and families. More specifically, she suggests the creation of a Principal

Child and Family Social Worker in each local authority with the responsibility to communicate frontline concerns to all levels of management.

The review notes that the views of children are currently seldom heard; largely because social workers are unable to prioritise spending time with children due to the demands of bureaucracy. However, it is not prescriptive about how to rectify this, recognising that there are numerous tools and methods that practitioners may be using to understand children's feelings and experiences. It also emphasises the importance of listening to parents.

Professor Munro criticises the current career path structure for social workers for hampering the development of expertise by moving skilled professionals from the frontline into management. She notes that many practitioners join the voluntary sector where they can spend more time directly engaging with children and families. She suggests promoting practice-based career pathways so that experienced social workers are able to follow a career path that takes them to very senior levels in the organisation without losing their prime focus on developing professional social work expertise. The review also calls for more management support, particularly for newly qualified social workers, so as to reduce the high turnover rates caused by burnout and the development of a learning environment in which senior practitioners teach and coach more junior staff. This should be part of an overall shift towards a culture of continuing professional development (CPD). The report suggests that the College of Social Work develops a national framework for CPD, regulating CPD courses and advising members on meeting their CPD requirements. It notes that the Health Professions Council, the social work regulator, has a key role to play in ensuring that social workers are meeting their CPD requirements.

Finally, the review identifies that the national system, like the local system, also needs a stronger voice for practitioners. It proposes the creation of a Chief Social Worker role (whose remit would cover both children and adults) to help the Government to better understand how its policies and procedures affect both practice at the front line and the experience of children, families and adults. The Chief Social Worker would receive feedback on the impact of policies from case reviews, principal social workers, inspections, LSCB chairs and the multi-disciplinary advisory group then use this to advise ministers and possibly to act as a champion for social workers in the media. The review argues that this should be part of a wider effort to improve the public image of social work, a job that the new Policy and Communications Unit of the College of Social Work will take a lead on.

Recommendation 13: Local authorities and their partners should start an ongoing 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.

Key questions for the VCSES:

- Will the Chief Social Work be able to effectively advocate on behalf of VCSES social workers as well as statutory ones?
- Are there other structural reforms, at local and national levels, which might support the effective resourcing of early help, or the other reforms suggested?
- What evidence do we have in the sector of what works for children, young people and families in contact with social work services?
- How can we support service users to have a greater voice commenting on the Munro Report and in the implementation of changes at a local level?

Reaction and Next Steps

Professor Munro’s final report has been broadly welcomed by the children’s sector. There has been general acceptance that Professor Munro has produced a detailed and well-evidenced set of recommendations which have the potential to make a significant improvement to child protection arrangements in England.

The Government has also given the report a warm reception, Children’s Minister Tim Loughton saying:

“This is the first review of child protection that hasn’t been initiated in the wake of a child death or serious case. This has allowed for a wide-ranging and in-depth review with some radically different proposals for reform. It is clear that Professor Munro has taken a long hard look at what is preventing child protection services from working as well as they should in this country and I welcome her thorough analysis of the problems.”¹

The Department for Education has established an Implementation Working Group (IWG) to help it develop a full response to Professor Munro’s recommendations before the summer recess starts on July 19th. Membership of the IWG is as follows:

Tim Loughton MP (Chair)	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
Anne Milton MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health
Yasmin Bevan	Executive Principal and Headteacher of Denbigh High School and Challney High School for Boys

¹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a0077182/independent-review-into-child-protection-says-free-professionals-from-central-government-control-to-let-them-do-their-jobs-properly>

Anne Marie Carrie	Chief Executive, Barnardo's
Matt Dunkley	President, Association of Directors of Children's Services and, Director of Children's Services, East Sussex County Council
John Goldup	Social Care Director, Ofsted
Kevin Jones	Assistant Director, Children's Social Care (Cumbria County Council)
Reena Keeble	Headteacher, Cannon Lane First School
Andrew Martin	Emergency Duty Social Work Team Manager (London Borough of Haringey)
Corinne May-Chahal	Co-Chair, National College of Social Work
Ian McPherson	National lead for Children and Young People, Association of Chief Police Officers & Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service
Roger Morgan	Children's Rights Director for England
Mark Rogers	Deputy Chair, Social Work Reform Board and, Chief Executive Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Amanda Thomas	Child Protection Officer, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Isabelle Trowler	Assistant Director, Children's Social Care (London Borough of Hackney)
Jo Webber	Deputy Policy director and Interim Director Ambulance Service Network, NHS Confederation

The IWG is keen to incorporate feedback from the VCSES into the Government's response. If you have any comments, criticisms or suggestions on the contents of Professor Munro's final report then please send them to nick@childrenengland.org.uk before **30th June 2011** and we will forward them onto the IWG.

Key Documents

We strongly recommend that all relevant professionals, both frontline and managers, take the time to read the full document.

[The Professor Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report – A Child-Centred System](#)

[The Professor Munro Review of Child Protection: Interim Report – The Child's Journey](#)

[The Professor Munro Review of Child Protection: Part One – A Systems Analysis](#)

For further information on this briefing please contact Nick Davies Policy & Information Officer, nick@childrenengland.org.uk or 020 7833 3319.

NCVYS comment on the Munro Review

June 2011

NCVYS welcomes the Munro Review and believes that it provides some well-evidenced recommendations which have the potential to improve child protection arrangements in England. However we are concerned that the review's focus on social work means that it fails to consider the child protection system as a whole and therefore does not adequately address the challenges within the health or schools systems. Consequently the challenges of safeguarding (older) young people are not satisfactorily set out in the Review. We echo the assessment of Carlene Firmin, Assistant Director, Policy and Research at Barnardo's that young people over the age of 10 still need to be protected from violence and abuse.² Early intervention to prevent future harm should be applied to young people of all ages.

NCVYS welcomes the fact that the Munro Review recognised that children and young people should "have a voice and be listened to". NCVYS has consistently argued for principles of youth participation to be embedded in safeguarding work.³ In order for children and young people's voices to be heard, investment in staff training and development for professionals working in safeguarding must recognise the importance of participation.⁴ We agree with the assessment of Bob Reitemeier, Chief Executive of the Children's Society, who said, "This is particularly true of the professionals working with older children, which unfortunately does not get the attention it deserves, due to society's focus on safeguarding infants... many professionals assume that older children are more resilient than they are, and consequently they do not provide adequate support to them."⁵

² *Child protection has forgotten the over-10s*, The Guardian (Tuesday 10 May 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/may/10/munro-review-child-protection-forgotten-over10s>

³ NCVYS has also consistently asked for this, e.g. *Response to the Lord Laming Inquiry*, NCVYS (December 2008) <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Policy/Position%20statements/NCVYS%20submission%20to%20Lord%20Laming.pdf>

⁴ E.g. *Response to the Department for Children, Schools and Families consultation on Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity*, NCVYS (June 2009) <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Policy/Policy%20consultation%20responses/2009/NCVYS%20response%20to%20DCSF%20Safeguarding%20against%20gangs.pdf>

⁵ *We must listen to the children, as Munro says*, The Guardian (Thursday 12 May 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/joepublic/2011/may/12/bob-reitemeier-munro-report-listen-to-the-children>