

Services for young people inquiry
Kathryn Smith
Education Select Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London
SW1P 3JA

4 October 2011

Dear Kathryn

The child protection system in England inquiry

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of national voluntary youth organisations and regional and local youth networks, NCVYS has been working since 1936 to raise the profile of youth work, share good practice and influence policy that has an impact on young people and the organisations that support them.
2. The NCVYS network reflects the diverse range of voluntary organisations working with young people at community, local, regional and national level. We cover around 80% of the voluntary youth sector in England and work with our members to build sustainable communities and services that help all young people achieve their potential. Most of our members offer opportunities to engage in challenging activities or develop creative talents. They also support young people to become active in their communities and offer opportunities for their voice to be heard. Some offer interventions to prevent or tackle specific issues such as homelessness or offending behaviour. Others offer counselling, advice, guidance and information. All contribute to young people's personal and social development; some also engage with spiritual development.
3. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Director of Policy and Communications, Faiza Chaudary or NCVYS's Policy Officer, Dom Weinberg on 020 7278 1041.



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Whether the child protection policies and practices of non-social work agencies and Government departments assist professionals to work together in the interests of the child.

4. NCVYS responded to the previous Government's Lord Laming inquiry in 2008 and the recommendations we made remain relevant to ensuring that child protection policies of voluntary and community sector organisations work alongside other professionals in the interests of the child.¹
5. **Recommendation 1: To invest in training for all staff that work with children and young people to give them the confidence and skills to act in order to protect and safeguard young people. This should be supported by clear guidance issued centrally to Local Safeguarding Children Boards that requires them to support the delivery of appropriate training to the voluntary sector.**
6. **Recommendation 2: We need a stronger focus on preventative services and we need to actively engage the voluntary and community youth sector to cultivate stronger community networks which act as preventative safety mechanisms for parents and families.**
7. **Recommendation 3: We need to focus more on improving the quality of front-line practice across all services for children and young people and review the degree to which external inspection focuses on the quality of front-line practice as well as the framework for delivery.**
8. **Recommendation 4: We need to help everyone, at all levels, to understand how the systems of accountability work - so that everyone in the system understands where their responsibilities begin and end. In particular we need a review of youth work training to look at how child protection and the wider concept of safeguarding is being integrated into youth work.**
9. **Recommendation 5: We need to improve our current systems to ensure continuous performance improvement, so that our structures and our focus all bear down on how we can improve outcomes for children and young people.**
10. **Recommendation 6: We need to ensure Social Workers are supported by other professionals working with vulnerable children and young people to ensure a spread of skills and experience in managing difficult cases and areas of potential risk.**
11. The recommendations in our response to the Department for Children, Schools and Families' 2009 consultation *Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity* can also be applied to safeguarding children and young people more widely.
12. **Recommendation 1: Voluntary and community youth sector representation on local strategic bodies, possibly through local infrastructure organisations, is necessary to ensure a joined-up, holistic approach to safeguarding children and young people [who may be affected by gang activity].**

¹ *Response to the Lord Laming Inquiry*, NCVYS (December 2008)
<http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Policy/Position%20statements/NCVYS%20submission%20to%20Lord%20Laming.pdf>

13. **Recommendation 2: Local Safeguarding Children's Boards should engage a diverse range of young people in policy and decision-making. NCVYS's principles of youth participation should be followed.²**
14. **Recommendation 3: Further guidance is needed to ensure that Local Safeguarding Children's Boards make training available and accessible to voluntary and community youth sector paid workers and volunteers.**
15. **Recommendation 4: Solutions to safeguard children [who may be affected by gang activity] must take a 'think family' approach which considers the needs of parents, families and carers as well as the needs of children and young people. This should operate in conjunction with support through individual interventions.**
16. **Recommendation 5: Government and local strategic bodies should utilise and support the development of resources produced by the voluntary and community youth sector to strengthen local partnership, in particular small voluntary and community youth sector organisations.**
17. **Recommendation 6: Organisations from all sectors need to be supported to develop safeguarding procedures, for example through NCVYS's Keeping it Safe standards and Sound Systems accreditation scheme.³**
18. More recently, NCVYS has welcomed the Munro Review and believes that it provides some well-evidenced recommendations which have the potential to improve child protection arrangements in England.
19. 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.⁴ Early intervention to prevent future harm should be applied to young people of all ages.
20. 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.⁵ 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.⁶ We agree with the

² *Principles of youth participation*, NCVYS

<http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Youth%20Participation/Principles%20of%20youth%20participation.pdf>

³ See <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/Safeguarding.html> for more details

⁴ *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>

⁵ 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>

⁶ 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>

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."⁷

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Faiza Chaudary', with a small dot at the end.

Faiza Chaudary
Director of Policy and Communications

⁷ *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>