

# Working Together to Safeguard Children – a New Era in Safeguarding



# Historical Context (Safeguarding Policy) – Scary???

- 1986 Working Together (draft)
- 1988 Working Together I
- 1989 Children Act (operational 14/10/1991)
- 1991 Working Together ii
- 1999/2000 Working Together iii/AF
- 2003 VC Inquiry Report/ECM/KCS
- 2004 Children Act 2004
- 2006 Working Together iv
- 2009 Laming (post PC) Review
- 2010 Working Together v
- 2010/11 Munro Review
- 2012 Working Together (draft) vi (hopefully!)
- 2012 Working Together vi/Assessment Framework (ii)

# You as an interagency practitioner

- People working skills. How well do you collaborate outside your practice group?
- Knowledge of your and others' roles (and where they fit together)?
- Willingness to collaborate?
- Collaboration as a mind-set?
- Munro - more flexible interagency groups
- More responsibility to LSCBs to oversee the quality of collaboration

# Revision of Working Together

## Rationale for change

- Problem – cumbersome document, not user friendly
- Too couched in the language of certainty
- Recommendation – simplify and improve guidance using input of all key professions with responsibilities in child protection

# Our 'Eureka' moment?

- “No longer will social workers, when they get a case, have to flick through this huge document, which, with its related documents, amounts to 713 pages. They will now have this, which is largely about saying, "You've been trained, you've got the expertise and this is what is required of you and partner agencies, now go and get on with it." That is a fantastic baton that most social workers are very eager to pick up and run with, but some think, "Are the Government serious? Are they really going to do it?" Today is a really important event to show that we are deadly serious about it, while others may be slightly nervous. However, it is going to happen and it is happening, and I hope that most social workers will rise to that challenge and get back to being social workers rather than computer operatives working to a highly prescriptive manual, as they have been for too long.” (Tim Loughton – previous Minister for Children)

# What BASW members told us

- Experienced workers described seeing it as a help rather than a hindrance, and only referring to it when needed
- Some called it a Bible!
- An invaluable tool for NQSWs - was very much part of their induction process
- A tool that could be used to explain and justify actions when challenged by other agencies and referrers.

# Masks the real issue

- **‘The State of Social Work survey’**  
([http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_23651-3.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_23651-3.pdf))
- High caseloads
- Excessive administrative demands
- Inadequate support and supervision
- Bullying culture and low morale
- High vacancy rates

# A Cautionary Tale?

“Into this potentially toxic mix we have now introduced a new destabilising factor - a major rewrite of Working Together and a completely new approach to the guidance. I completely agree that the guidance had become overblown - we need to place more emphasis on developing staff skills and competence rather than procedural and mechanistic guidance. **HOWEVER**, central guidance – clear, mandatory and unequivocal – about the framework of local cooperation is essential if the system is to work.” (David Jones, Independent Chair, Leicester Safeguarding Children Board speaking at Reforms to the Child Protection System, May 2012)

# Risk of organisational memory loss

- New structures – health service reform, police, public spending review



# Asking the right questions

- Why does Working Together matter?
- Origins go back to 1973/4 death of Maria Colwell. Inquiry Report published – birth of the ‘modern’ system (conferences, registers and procedures)
- Multi-agency working
- Emergence of complex range of issues including child trafficking, witchcraft, forced marriage, organised abuse, child sexual exploitation

# What are we losing?

Chapters 1,4,6,9 and 12

- Training, development and supervision for inter-agency working
- Role of independent sector
- Focus on BAME and disabled children
- Links between child abuse and substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health issues

# Proposed New Format

- *Working together to safeguard children*: draft guidance on what is expected of organisations, individually and jointly, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- *Managing individual cases: the framework for the assessment of children in need and their families*: draft guidance on undertaking assessments of children in need;
- *Statutory guidance on learning and improvement*: proposed new arrangements for Serious Case Reviews, reviews of child deaths and other learning processes led by Local Safeguarding Children Boards

# Main Thrust of Working Together

- Professionals must discuss concerns they have with a social worker. LA decide whether a referral is appropriate.
- Following a referral, a social worker must make a decision within one working day about the type of response that is required.
- Children's services should feedback to the referrer on the decisions made and next steps.
- A social worker must see the child as soon as possible if the decision is further assessment.
- Children's services should work with all professionals to arrange case discussion meetings

# Main thrust of Managing Individual Cases

- Framework for assessing cases replacing nationally prescribed timescales. LAs with their partner agencies must develop their own local frameworks for assessment.
- Social workers to make judgements on case-by-case basis on how quickly an assessment should be carried out after a referral, to be done in discussion with a manager. Some complex cases will need longer to complete.

# Continued

- Social workers are responsible for determining what response is required eg whether the case requires a section 17 or section 47 assessment
- The social worker must discuss the child's case with other professionals and agree meetings.
- The social worker will inform children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when a decision will be made on the next steps.
- Any decisions should be properly recorded to reduce the need for repeat assessments during care proceedings.
- The local framework for assessment must set an internal review point for completing assessments.

# Main Thrust of Statutory Guidance on Learning and Improvement

- A new approach to learning and improvement from SCRs. Greater transparency - LSCBs to translate the findings into programmes of action.
- Social workers must be involved in SCRs and invited to contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took using sound judgement and good intentions.
- SCRs should be conducted using systems methodology as recommended by Eileen Munro. This means gathering information not only about what professionals did, but also why and what this reveals about how the system needs to change.

# Continued

- The LSCB should aim to complete an SCR within six months.
- Social workers supporting parents and family members should assure them the objective of the child death review process is not to place blame, but to learn lessons.
- The guidance also sets out the criteria for instigating an SCR.

# Review of What's New

- Local frameworks for assessment
- Dispensing with timeframes
- Internal review point
- Re-assertion of social workers exercising professional judgement
- Emerging findings from the trial authorities (Emily R Munro and Clare Lushey, Childhood Wellbeing Centre July 2012)

# Some Concerns

- 152 different versions of assessment.
- Lack of timeframes = potential for drift, narrowing of focus on climate of scare resources to cp cases.
- What about children in need? Children with disabilities?
- Where to get specific guidance?

# Issues raised by BASW members

- Focus should not just be learning from cases where things have gone wrong. We can also learn from successful practice
- Overturning the 'blame' culture is a 'big ask' and cannot be done in isolation
- Changing culture in organisations themselves is pivotal
- How will learning from SCRs be disseminated?  
Currently, not widespread enough

# And Finally

## **REMEMBER!**

- None of this is set in stone yet. It is not an absolute 'given'.
- Government as yet have not responded to the responses to the consultation
- We now have a new minister – Edward Timpson
- We wait in anticipation

# Thank You for listening!

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[www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/)

[http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_122703-7.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_122703-7.pdf)

