

ADCS response to Munro review of child protection

13th July 2011

- **Targets on timescales and assessments should be removed immediately;**
- **Serious case review guidance should be amended immediately;**
- **Health and education roles in child protection and early help crucial to a better service for children and families.**

Children's Services Directors today called for elements of Professor Munro's recommendations for improving child protection to be implemented immediately. Guidance on timescales for assessment and learning from serious cases should be subject to urgent review, the Association of Directors of Children's Services said in its response to the Munro Review of Child Protection, published today.

Welcoming the proposals to put more trust in social workers by reducing the amount of prescriptive guidance relating to child protection investigations, ADCS called for the principles to be extended to all social work with children and families. Instructions for social workers working with children in care and in adoption and fostering services would benefit from similar revisions, they said, in order to allow social workers to use their skills in building relationships and offering support to vulnerable young people.

ADCS agrees with all Professor Munro's recommendations in principle and recognises that not all the recommendations can be effectively implemented immediately. Proposals to fully review all the guidance associated with child protection and improve training and support for the workforce will take substantial investment and time, they said, but some improvements could be made relatively quickly, such as the way serious case reviews are carried out and evaluated.

Local leadership would be key in developing a learning culture among social workers and within local authority children's services departments, the response adds, highlighting Professor Munro's support for the role of the Director of Children's Services and a dedicated lead member for children and young people.

Debbie Jones, Vice President of ADCS, said:

"We are delighted with the thorough review and thoughtful recommendations produced by Professor Munro and believe that, if they are fully supported by government and employers, they will go a long way to improving the way that social workers work with children and families in these very difficult circumstances. The government's response today gives us hope that this work will be taken forward in the same collaborative spirit as the review itself."

The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd

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“This will not be a quick process and it will take time for professionals to get accustomed to more freedom and discretion – employers will need to support the transition from a “command and control” model of practice to one in which individuals take responsibility for their decisions. We believe that all areas of children’s social work would benefit from a similar review of the guidance and regulations prescribing ways of working with children and families. Local employers have a key role to play in supporting the workforce through these quite dramatic changes to ways of working.”

Commenting on the role of health agencies and schools in supporting children and families, both when there are child protection concerns and when a child or family would benefit from “early help”, Debbie Jones added:

“Improvements to social work alone will not produce the change that we all want to see. Professor Munro notes the changes in health and education as a risk to the multi-agency arrangements that are crucial to good child protection services. Local authorities will need to work with partners locally to build strong relationships across agencies, while central government will have a role to play in ensuring that child protection responsibilities are writ large in any structural changes being proposed. We hope to see the Department for Education and the Department of Health implementing Professor Munro’s recommendations in a joined-up way.”

Notes to Editors

- 1) ADCS is the national leadership association for Directors of Children’s Services and their senior management teams in local authorities.
- 2) The ADCS response to the Munro review’s recommendations is published today, 13th July. It is available at www.adcs.org.uk or on request from Rebecca Godar.
- 3) ADCS President, Matt Dunkley, sat on the Munro Implementation Group in a personal capacity. His reflections are offered in the press release issued by the Department for Education here:
- 4) Debbie Jones is the Vice President of ADCS and the DCS in London Borough of Lambeth.

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