

## **PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE MUNRO REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION AND SOCIAL WORK REFORM – A VIEW FROM THE CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

At its meeting on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, CIB considered an update report on sector support for implementing the Munro Review of Child Protection and Social Work Reform. The CIB Delivery Team was commissioned to map existing initiatives in regions and commitments for regional programmes in 2012-13. As part of the mapping exercise, regions were also invited to identify key barriers to effective implementation and to suggest how best to deploy national sector-led improvement capacity to add value and coherence to the work of local authorities and their partners. The Chair of CIB made a commitment that the key findings from CIB's analysis would be submitted to Professor Eileen Munro to inform her preparation of a progress report to the Department for Education (DfE), to be published in May 2012.

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, CIB considered an update report on sector support for implementing the Munro Review of Child Protection and Social Work Reform. The CIB Delivery Team was commissioned to map existing initiatives in regions and commitments for regional programmes in 2012-13. As part of the mapping exercise, regions were also invited to identify key barriers to effective implementation and to suggest how best to deploy national sector-led improvement capacity to add value and coherence to the work of local authorities and their partners. CIB Brokers have coordinated the mapping exercise and provided an outline report for each region. An analysis of key findings is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The Chair of CIB made a commitment that the key findings from CIB's analysis would be submitted to Professor Eileen Munro to inform her preparation of a progress report to the Department for Education (DfE), to be published in May 2012.

### **2 Progress in Implementing the Munro Review of Child Protection and Social Work Reform – Key Messages From Children's Improvement Board**

- 2.1 Whilst there are some good examples of improvement activity in regions and individual local authorities, progress overall is patchy. Whilst Councils are committed to implement the recommendations, too many appear to be developing aspects of the Munro Review and/or Social Work Reform in ways that create incremental rather than whole-system change.

- 2.2 Evidence from sector-led improvement indicates that all regions have identified the implementation of the Munro Review of Child Protection and Social Work Reform as key priorities for improvement activity in 2012-13.
- 2.3 Local authorities and sector partners have identified a number of barriers to effective implementation and see a key role for the Children's Improvement Board in promoting and enabling local leadership of change. Particularly important is the need for CIB to work with the sector in developing agreement about what successful implementation would look like and what needs to happen to accelerate the pace of implementation.
- 2.4 The opportunity must be taken by sector partners, working with the Department for Education and Department of Health, to promote a wider, more integrated approach to system change that incorporates the various reforms emanating from the Social Work Reform Board, the Munro Review, and the drive for personalisation in adult social care.

### **3. Proposed activity 2012-13**

Local implementation, if it is to be effective and sustained over time, needs to be collectively driven by the sector, not just by individual Councils. CIB will play a key role in this at both national and regional levels through:

- sector-led improvement cycle activity around peer challenge, peer review, improvement support and self-assessment
- Developing more sector specialists in safeguarding and on the analysis of performance information
- promoting evidence-based improvement to identify and share good practice and innovation including regional development sites
- developing relevant data profiles that enable more effective peer challenge and support

Both DfE and CIB share concerns about the potential atomisation of policy and will endeavour to present and support the implementation as a whole systems approach. This will be based on a systemic model which concentrates support around Leadership, Systems and Workforce drawing on the learning from the DCS Leadership Programme and Implementation Science.

Local authorities are already engaged in a long term programme to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, and raise the standards of social work practice. This work forms the basis for many of the Munro reforms in relation to social work so it is important that this work continues, enabling social workers to develop their research knowledge and professional skills and work more effectively with other professionals. The SWRB's Standards for Employers, being promoted by LGA should enable local authorities to create the conditions for social workers to provide effective help to children and families. CIB will continue to actively support this work.

In response to sector feedback and proposed revisions to national guidance including “working together” there will be a particular focus over the coming year on Serious Case Reviews. This will include commissioning an observatory type function on lessons/trends from SCRs and disseminating nationally. CIB will also consider the best approach for the development and accreditation of a pool of SCR reviewers who are expert in systems methodology.

Given Professor Munro’s recommended stronger role for LSCBs in monitoring the effectiveness of help offered locally, particularly early help, we think there is a need for some one-off national training for key LSCB members. CIB will also look to refocus some of its activity to look at support for commissioning early help.

In each region we intend to identify a lead Local Authority that will act as a ‘development site’ for implementing local leadership of whole-system’ change, and promoting learning across the region. CIB would use national capacity to develop and support a systemic change model, particularly addressing the key issue of organisational culture.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF MUNRO REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION AND SOCIAL WORK REFORM: ANALYSIS FROM CIB REGIONS MARCH 2012**

### **Summary Findings**

#### **How far do Munro Review/ Social Work Reform Feature in CIB Regional Programmes?**

- All CIB regions have stated their intention to include Munro Review/Social Work Reform within their programmes for 2012/13.
- In 2011/12, there are some examples of improvement activity at a regional level, and by individual local authorities.
- **Awareness raising conferences** have been held in East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, and North East
- The **East Midlands** has established professional networks at regional to support Munro implementation. A major focus in 2011/12 has been the 'Reflective Safeguarding' project, which has focused on improving casework practice and improved learning from case reviews. In 2012-13 the 'Leadership of Munro Implementation' will include a pre-programme audit and self-evaluation; a thematic focus on one of: solution focused therapies; single assessment processes; social learning approaches; reflective safeguarding practice.
- **London** has commissioned scoping reports to support the implementation of a coherent 'early help' offer and improved arrangements for contact, referral, assessment and access to services through a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- The **South East** has commissioned a local policy implementation project to improve the quality of assessment.
- Aspects of the Munro Review feature as the focus for **peer challenge** in a number of local authorities, notably in **London, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside** and the **North East**. The **East Midlands** peer challenge model includes a Safeguarding Assurance visit for every local authority every 18 months.
- Regions are also establishing or refocusing learning networks to drive changes in social work practice. Notable examples are the **East of England Safeguarding Project, the North West Best Practice Network**, and the **South West Safeguarding Leadership Project**.

#### **What are the Barriers to Progress?**

CIB regions have identified a number of barriers to progress as follows:

- Delays in the original timetable for national developments that should underpin local changes, most notably the revision of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. Key aspects of the architecture of the compliance, process-driven child protection system remain in place (for example Serious Case review methodology, assessment timescales for Initial and Core Assessments).
- The need to implement the Munro changes within a wider context that includes changes to local authority structures (for example the creation

of People directorates) and substantial budget reductions. A number of councils have indicated that they are now considering the Munro changes as part of a more fundamental review of community-based preventative services that incorporate services for vulnerable adults and aligned services involving sector partners. Combined with the delay in national developments the result is a 'planning blight' in which changes is incremental and patchy.

- The capacity to invest in 'early help' preventative services has been limited by the need to make major savings. Existing preventative services have sometimes been identified for reductions in expenditure.
- Uncertainty about new arrangements with the NHS and Schools has led local authorities to opt for a more incremental approach.
- Some local authorities have opted to invest in the skills and capacity of social workers as a necessary first stage before proceeding to wider reform of the system.
- Local authorities are also keen to make sense of the Munro review alongside other developments in relation to Care and Adoption, Family Justice Review and work with troubled families.

### **Progress and Perspectives on Aspects of the Munro Review/ Social Work Reform Proposals**

#### **Serious Case Reviews – Use of alternative methodologies**

- There is strong support for the systems approach to Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), as proposed in the Munro Review. A number of regions have been engaged in the pilot programme with the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). Regions are positive about the learning that flows from the systems approach but have concerns about the need to streamline the approach as the current model is considered to be resource-intensive.
- All regions agree on the importance of, accrediting and maintaining a pool of SCR reviewers who are expert in systems methodology.

#### **Social Care Workforce Development**

- Seen by all regions as a critical factor in the success of the reforms. A strong theme was the need to ensure that Munro's proposals for developing social work expertise are taken forward in conjunction with the wider changes being put in place by the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB). The SWRB's Standards for Employers, being promoted by LGA, should enable local authorities to create the conditions for social workers to provide effective help to children and families. **Birmingham City Council**, for example, has initiated a social work change programme alongside systematic early help arrangements through Integrated Family Support Teams.

#### **Role of Principal Social Worker**

- The role of Principal Social Worker is generally seen as a positive development to lead and promote quality in social work practice. Evidence from regions indicates that local authorities are interpreting the role and its location within service structure differently, and many are still in the process of making an appointment to the role. It will be important

to capture the learning about the relative impact of the different approaches to the role being adopted.

**Developing the role and effectiveness of LSCBs**

- There is strong support for the proposal that LSCBs should take a key leadership role across agencies for promoting early help arrangements and monitoring their impact. National guidance for LSCBs on their specific role would be helpful for independent chairs. LSCBs need support in improving their the overall effectiveness which should be a key focus in safeguarding Peer Reviews.

**Implications of changes to partnership governance**

- Regions have not reported the move to Health and Well-Being Board (HWB) arrangements as presenting a particular barrier to progress in implementing the Munro Review other than to note the general concern that the commissioning framework for the HWB enables Children's Services and safeguarding priorities to be identified and resourced.