

AGENDA ITEM: 6 Pages: 7 – 14

Meeting	Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	5 January 2012
Subject	The Munro Review
Report of	Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families
Summary	This report outlines the key recommendations of the Munro Review, the implications for Barnet, and the next steps required by Government departments and Barnet Council.

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Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	None
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in	Not applicable

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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That Members consider the implications of the Munro Review and comment as appropriate on the current and proposed actions that the council has put in place.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 None

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan 2011/2013 contains the strategic objective 'Continue to safeguard vulnerable children and adults from avoidable harm at a time of reduced resources'. This is highlighted within the Barnet Children and Young People Plan 2010-2013, which also includes the objective to 'identify and protect those most at risk of harm'. The Munro Review of Child Protection highlighted the need to move towards a system with less central prescription and greater trust and responsibility in skilled professionals which would help to support this objective.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 There is a risk that without robust planning and implementation the council could fail to keep up with national changes to safeguarding legislation and inspection and this could result in the council failing to meet its statutory obligations.
- 4.2 There is a risk that if the council is not adequately prepared for the national changes being made to safeguarding and inspection frameworks Barnet Council could be found by Ofsted to be performing poorly. An adverse assessment of Safeguarding and Child Protection services would impact on the 'performs excellently' (4) annual assessment Barnet's Children's Service currently has, and could lead to Barnet being seen as a less successful borough to live and work in.
- 4.3 If changes made by the council are not driven by robust research and planning, then there is a risk that changes made at a local level to frontline child protection services may not be effective and responsive to the needs of Barnet's children and young people.
- 4.4 If changes to the way that frontline child protection services are carried out are not communicated effectively to staff, children, young people and families, this could negatively impact upon the service's ability to provide high quality safeguarding services.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 5.1 In fulfilling any of its statutory functions the Council is obliged to have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, section 149.
- 5.2 Implementing the recommendations of the Munro Review will help to further improve the effectiveness of the child protection system in place, protecting some of Barnet's most vulnerable children and young people.
- 5.3 Males are more likely to be subject to a child protection plan than females and under children are also overrepresented in the cohort. As at March 2011 88% of the 203 children subject to a Child Protection Plan were male and 78% of the children were aged ten or under. Black children are overrepresented in the children in care population (31% compared with 14.9% of Barnet 0-19 population as at March 2011) while white and

Indian children are underrepresented (43% and 1% of children in care population respectively, compared with 56.2% and 8% of Barnet 0-19 population).

6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Sustainability)

Finance and staffing

- 6.1 All local authorities have been allocated Social Work Improvement Funding, accessible from 3 October 2011, in relation to the Munro Review. Barnet has been allocated £75,190 and it is recommended by Central Government that half of this is used by the Local Safeguarding Children Board to implement change that falls within its remit. The remaining £37,595 is being used to provide Project Officer support in implementing the Munro recommendations, including coordinating the Munro Project Group. SWIF monies paid to Local Authorities in 2011/12 are not time limited by the Children's Workforce Development Council.

IT

- 6.2 The Munro Review has implications for the way in which data is reported on. This is likely to require changes to ICS (the Children's Social Care data management system).

7. LEGAL ISSUES

- 7.1 During this period of innovation and national learning the council will need to continue to meet the statutory requirements set-out in the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, and all other enabling legislation.
- 7.2 Changes to the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' were recommended by the Munro Review and are likely to require the local authority to make changes to the way that it monitors and evaluates its safeguarding provision.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 8.1 The scope of Scrutiny Committees is contained within Part 2, Article 6 of the constitution; the Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Committees are in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the constitution).

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background

- 9.1 In June 2010, the Secretary of State for Education asked Professor Munro to conduct a review of front line child protection practice, with a focus on strengthening the social work profession, to put them in a better position to make well-informed judgements based on up-to-date evidence in the best interests of children and free from unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation. A key question that the Review sought to answer, was 'what helps professionals make the best judgement they can to protect a vulnerable child?'
- 9.2 The Munro Review is one of the only reviews of child protection practice that has not been commissioned as a result of a child's death. The Munro Review builds on the work of Lord Laming's Progress Report (March 2009) and the Social Work Task Force, drawing on the evidence submitted to these reviews.
- 9.3 The Munro Review, published in May 2011, sets out proposals for child protection reform which aim to create the conditions required to enable professionals to make the best

judgements about the help to give to children, young people and families. The report recommended moving from a system that has become over bureaucratized and focused on compliance to one that values and develops professional expertise and is focused on the safety and welfare of children and young people.

- 9.4 The review found that children's services have become too standardised, which has reduced their ability to respond flexibly to need at a local level. The report concluded that current child protection practices put too much emphasis on procedures and recording, which result in insufficient attention being given to developing and supporting the expertise to work effectively with children, young people and families. In particular the report emphasised the importance of doing the right thing (i.e. checking whether children and young people are being helped), instead of 'doing things right' (i.e. following procedures).
- 9.5 The final report made 15 recommendations with the overarching theme being that local areas should have more freedom to develop their own effective child protection services, rather than focusing on meeting central government targets.
- 9.6 In July 2011 the Government published its response to the Munro Review. The Government report accepted Munro's fundamental argument that the child protection system has lost its focus on the things that matter most: the views and experiences of children themselves. It agreed that the child protection system needs to have less central prescription and interference and that greater trust and responsibility should be placed with skilled professionals at the front line.
- 9.7 Central Government has grouped the 15 recommendations under the following four themes:
- valuing professional experience;
 - sharing responsibility for the provision of early help;
 - developing social care expertise and supporting effective practice and
 - strengthening accountabilities and creating a learning system
- 9.8 It is important to note that although the recommendations may seem straight forward, many of the recommendations will involve major changes being made to legislative practice and potentially radical changes being made to the way that child protection practices are measured and delivered.
- 9.9 Some of the recommendations are for government departments to implement, while others will require local implementation. The 15 recommendations are set out below along with the next steps required by government and or Barnet Council.

Recommendations and next steps

9.10 Theme 1 – Valuing Professional Experience

a) Central Government to work in partnership with local government and various agencies to revise the Working Together to Safeguard Children and The Framework for the Assessment of Children in and their Families by July 2012.

- A Barnet working group will be set-up to plan for and implement any actions required as a result of changes to safeguarding legislation. The working group is currently awaiting interim amendments from Central Government to streamline reporting around assessments of risk to children. These are due in December 2011.

b) *The Ofsted inspection framework should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services to the protection of children.*

- Ofsted is to develop a new inspection framework to be in place by May 2012.
- Barnet Children's Service responded to the government consultation on the proposed new framework; welcoming the proportionate approach to inspection, increased focus on the experiences of children and young people, and scrutiny of individual cases.

c) *The Ofsted inspection framework should allow the experiences of children and young people to inform and shape the provision of services.*

- Barnet Council already has a Children's Service Participation Strategy in place and the views of children and young people are regularly sought and used to inform service provision including via Youth Shield (the junior safeguarding board) and Role Model Army (the Children in Care Council).
- A Barnet Council working group has been set-up to investigate the opportunities for children and young people to shape all areas of service provision in Barnet relating to identifying children at risk and protecting them. The group has agreed to carry out an audit of how the views of young people in Barnet are used to shape these services, highlighting any gaps. The group will also lead on the implementation of any actions regarding the experiences of children and young people that emerge from the new Ofsted inspection framework in May 2012.

d) *National and local performance information should be used to help facilitate improvement and promote accountability, rather than as the sole measure of performance.*

- Central Government will shortly confirm what the locally published performance information should be. This is due to be in place by May 2012.
- Barnet Council currently uses both national and local performance indicators to monitor the Children's Service performance. It is currently the practice within Barnet Council that, where performance falls below target, commentary is provided to analyse what is happening and where improvements can be made. Case audits also take place to identify where outcomes could be improved for individual children and young people. These findings are shared to help inform improvements in practice.
- A project lead has been identified to lead on the implementation of any new actions that emerge when new guidance around performance information is issued by Government.

9.11 Theme 2 –Sharing Responsibility for the Provision of Early Help

e) *Government should research the impact of health reorganisation on protecting children.*

- The Department for Health and the Department for Education are to work together to develop an accountability framework for safeguarding children, in the context of the NHS reforms.
- Barnet Council is well placed to respond to the changes happening in the NHS. Barnet Council already has a working shadow Health and Wellbeing Board, which the Director of Children's Service and Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families sit on. Health partners are represented on the Children's Trust Board and Barnet Safeguarding Children Board, and we will work with them to ensure that children continue to be safeguarded in the light of health reorganisation.

f) 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.

- A new inspection framework will be in place by May 2012 to test the efficiency of this arrangement.
- Barnet Council has already identified early intervention as a key priority for the Children's Service and for partners. Significant investment has taken place in early intervention and prevention services to help identify issues early, ensure appropriate support is put in place, and reduce the need for higher level services later on. A Family Focus team has been created to work with families before complex services are required, while an Intensive Family Focus Team works with families in the borough that have multiple and high level needs to help increase their resilience and reduce their need for ongoing support
- Barnet Council is also well placed in terms of identifying the need for early help services through the work conducted for the Barnet JSNA, which was published in June 2011 and the yearly updated profile of Children and Young People in Barnet. These are used to inform service planning.
- Barnet Children's Service will continue to work close with multi-agency partners to ensure that the early help offer provided within Barnet is appropriate to local needs and in line with the new inspection framework in time for May 2012.

g) 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

- Barnet Council has already strengthened the front line of social care to help better screen and prioritise referrals and additional support has been added to Barnet's Referral and Assessment team duty desk, to enable front line staff to focus on children and families. Barnet Council has also increased the capacity at more advanced stages of the child protection process, for example adding a fifth Child in Need team
- A Barnet project group for this work stream has been set-up and will carry out a review of Barnet's child protection pathways and business processes to ensure that there is smooth and effective journey for children and young people through to specialist services.
- The project group will also examine examples of best practice in other local authorities.

9.12 Theme 3 – Developing Social Care Expertise and Supporting Effective Practice

h) A Chief Social Worker should be created in Government.

i) The Social Work Reform Board's Professional Capabilities Framework should explicitly inform social work qualification.

j) Employers and Higher Education Institutes should work together so that social work students are prepared for the challenges of child protection work

k) 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.

- Central Government anticipates that all local authorities will have a Principal Child and Family Social Worker by July 2012.
- Barnet Council does not currently have a Principal Child and Family Social Worker. The council is waiting for further clarification of the role and the level of seniority required before designating this role to a professional.

9.13 Theme 4 – Strengthening Accountabilities and Creating a Learning System

l) The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) should submit an annual report to the Chief Executive and Leader of the council, and, subject to the passage of legislation the local Police Commissioner and Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board.

- It is already the practice of Barnet's LSCB to submit an annual report to the Children's Trust Board and a report on Safeguarding across the Council, which includes a progress update from the BSCB, goes to Cabinet and Council each year. The Borough Commander for Barnet and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board both sit on the Barnet Children's Trust Board. Going forward the Chair of the LSCB will ensure that he continues to submit the annual report in line with national legislation

m) The statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, should be amended to state that when monitoring and evaluating local arrangements, LSCBs should, focus on meeting local need and the effectiveness of multi agency training.

- Barnet Council already offers a significant amount of multi-agency safeguarding training and will continue to do so. The effectiveness of these training sessions is monitored using evaluation forms that are filled out by participants at the end of each training session.

n) The scope of the roles of Director of Children's Service and Lead Member for Children should not be expanded outside of Children's Services.

- The Government is currently consulting on how to revise the statutory guidance on the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children
- In Barnet the Director of Children' Service and Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families are distinct roles and there are currently no plans to change this.

o) 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.

- The Government has been considering the evidence and opportunities for using system review methodologies for Serious Case Reviews and further consideration will be given to whether the evaluation of SCRs in their current form should be ended.
- Barnet Council is already carrying out a discretionary case review using systems methodology, as part of the SCIE model (Social Care Institute of Excellence) pilot for learning from case review. This stands Barnet Council in good stead to adapt the review model in line with best practice.

9.14 A core multi-agency Munro Project Group has been set-up to oversee the different individual work streams relating to the 15 recommendations. Where appropriate progress will be reported to the Children's Trust Board.

10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 A Child Centred system: The Government's response to the Munro review of child protection July 2011
<http://www.nfm.org.uk/component/jdownloads/finish/35/474>
- 10.2 Final Report A Child Centred System, May 2011. Professor Eileen Munro
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Munro-Review.pdf>

LS: MM
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