



# NSCB Newsletter

Edition

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## **The Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services A message from Chris Few: Independent Chair of the NSCB**

As many colleagues will now be aware, Ofsted published their report setting out the findings of the Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after services on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010. The report finds that safeguarding services in Nottinghamshire were 'inadequate', although, on a more positive note, the overall effectiveness of services for looked after children has been found to be 'adequate', with some good features, and with good capacity for improvement.

The Inspectors recognised that the NSCB has appropriate independent leadership and that its work is supported well through a good range of subgroups. They found that joint working between the NSCB and the Children's Trust has effectively produced a shared vision and agreed priorities for improvement across the broad safeguarding agenda. The work of the Board in disseminating the findings from serious case reviews and the training/seminar programme were also identified as positive. The key issue for the NSCB is to demonstrate that it provides sufficient challenge across the sector to ensure that services for the most vulnerable children in need and those in need of protection are delivered effectively by partners. We are committed to achieving this and over the coming months will be working with partners to do so.

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Whilst the safeguarding judgement is a disappointment, it was not unexpected. Following the unannounced inspection of children's social care contact and referral points in October 2009 an improvement programme was developed, led by Nottinghamshire County Council, to address the issues raised. Although some progress was made between the unannounced and announced inspections the required impact on the capacity and quality of frontline services was not able to be delivered within that timescale. The improvement programme has now been refocused to ensure the immediate and short term priorities are clearly

distinguished from the medium and long term developments. This is underpinned by significant additional financial investment, and much of the required increase in staffing capacity is now in place. The NSCB will also be shortly launching a revised set of inter-agency procedures to reflect the 2010 revision of Working Together to Safeguard Children. This will be supplemented by a revised multi-agency Pathway to Services document currently nearing completion.

These measures will provide the foundations for ensuring that our most vulnerable children are safeguarded. That is not however enough. If we are to provide the excellent services that children deserve we must all work together cooperatively across agency boundaries, put individual children and their needs at the centre of all our activity and where necessary challenge each other to do this. I ask that you share my commitment to working in this way and to keeping Nottinghamshire as safe a place as possible for our children and young people.

## Door locking policy

Also on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010 the NSCB published the executive summary of a recent Serious Case Review re a child referred to in the summary as BN. The executive summary received a high level of media attention and so colleagues may already be aware of some of the features of this case. One of the key issues was in relation to the practice of locking children in a room as a way of keeping them safe.

The NSCB has agreed a position statement in relation to this practice. This makes it clear that partner agencies within Nottinghamshire do not support the locking of children in rooms by their parents / carers and will work together to ensure that consistent and coordinated advice is provided. It is recognised that there are a number of disabled children who may have types of behaviour which severely challenges those who care for them. This would include for example, those who self harm, those who target / physically harm other children in the household and those, who due to their disability, are at risk of running away or exposing themselves to other forms of risk if they are not under constant adult supervision.

It is important that all professionals working with the child agree a multi-agency approach to keep the child / young person safe from harm within their family home without recourse to the deprivation of their liberty.

Further guidance will be issued shortly as part of the revised practice guidance regarding Safeguarding Disabled Children.

## Safeguarding Disabled Children

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Boards have produced practice guidance to support professionals in ensuring that disabled children are effectively protected. It is available on the Board web pages. This is currently in the process of being reviewed to reflect updated national guidance. The national practice guidance can be accessed [here](#)

Disabled children have exactly the same human rights to be safe from abuse and neglect, to be protected from harm and achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes as non-disabled

children. The national guidance indicates that disabled children require additional action. It suggests that this is because they experience increased vulnerability as a result of negative attitudes about disabled children and because they may have additional needs relating to physical, sensory, cognitive and/ or communication impairments.

It is important to note that whilst at times it is immediately apparent that a non-disabled child has suffered significant harm, it is not always so and lengthy enquiries are often necessary. Where there are safeguarding concerns about a disabled child, there is a need for greater awareness of the possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect, as the situation is often more complex. However, it is crucial when considering whether a disabled child has been abused and/or neglected that the disability does not mask or deter an appropriate investigation of child protection concerns. Any such concerns for the safety and welfare of a disabled child should be acted upon in the same way as that for a non-disabled child.

## Escalation Procedure

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies and a commitment to genuine partnership working. As part of this there needs to be a system in place to enable disagreements to be resolved to the satisfaction of practitioners and organisations involved. The aim should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner level between organisations, where this is possible, but where not the disagreement should be escalated until a resolution is achieved. Disagreements should not be left unresolved.

The NSCB has produced an escalation procedure, which creates a framework within which agencies can work together to resolve disagreements whilst remaining child focussed. The Escalation Procedure will be incorporated into the revised Child Protection Procedures and is currently available on the NSCB webpage.

It is important that all staff who work with children in Nottinghamshire follow this procedure if they disagree about the action, or failure to take action, of another agency.

## Working Together to Safeguard Children – Revised guidance

Working Together to Safeguard Children is the guidance, which sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It was last revised in 2006. The death of Baby Peter in Haringey and the profile given to services to protect children resulted in Lord Laming's report, *The Protection of Children in England*, published in March 2009. This most recent version of Working Together issued in March 2010 takes into account the recommendations of the Laming report and the government's acceptance of these. It also reflects other developments in legislation, policy and practice in safeguarding children.

The first part of Working Together (Chapters 1–8) is issued as statutory guidance; the second part (Chapters 9-12) is non-statutory practice guidance. The contents of the guidance are now implemented, other than one exception relating to care planning for children who are both looked after and subject to a child protection plan.

Working Together addresses both strategic and operational issues. The preface to the guidance indicates which chapters should be particularly read by different staff groups.

The basic principles contained within Working Together – of widespread ownership of safeguarding, organisations understanding of their responsibilities, effective working both within and between agencies, how individual cases should be managed – were contained within earlier versions of the guidance. However, the Working Together guidance has been significantly extended in its successive versions and now runs to 394 pages.

The Working Together guidance can be accessed by clicking [here](#)

## Revisions to Child Protection Procedures

The local Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures are in the process of being revised to take into account the findings from local serious case reviews and the revised requirements set out in the 2010 version of Working Together to Safeguard Children. The revised procedures will be published in early June. To promote awareness of the changes two inter-agency, cross-authority seminars will be held in early July. Some of the key changes are highlighted below

### **Key Revisions arising from Serious Case Review recommendations include**

Ensuring assessments are based on all available information. This includes accessing information from other local authorities when families have lived elsewhere and seeking information directly from birth fathers, particularly where they do not live with the child.

Strengthening the guidance regarding pre-birth assessments to require that a referral should be made to social care where staff become aware that a person (or their partner) who has previously had a child removed has become pregnant or assumed the care of another child. In cases where a child has been removed from a parent's care, a core assessment should be undertaken (by social care) on any child subsequently cared for by that person (including an unborn baby).

Strengthening the requirement that Child Protection Plans should be written in a way that enables outcomes to be measured more effectively and highlighting the potential benefits of the use of written agreements with parents.

Requiring that where a medical assessment takes place as part of a Section 47 Enquiry the paediatrician should provide a written summary report immediately to those attending and a full report within 72 hours.

The requirement that no child be discharged from hospital where child protection concerns have been identified, without an agreed plan to manage those risks, was already covered by the existing NSCB procedures. The revised procedures clarify that this expectation also applies to babies being discharged following birth.

The current procedures already cover the need to develop appropriate contingency plans and the revised procedures have reinforced this, particularly in relation to disengagement by parents/ carers from services.

In addition to the local SCR findings a revision to the procedures has been agreed in response to a SCR undertaken by Lincolnshire. This requires that when working with children subject to a protection plan random unannounced visits and examination of bedrooms and food storage are undertaken and that a child must be seen at least every six weeks away from their parents.

When the revised local procedures are published all key changes will be highlighted in an accompanying memo. The procedures and accompanying memo will be published on the NSCB webpage.

## Referrals to Children's Social Care and Health, Reception and Assessment Services

In order to improve the reception and assessments service provided by children's social care a temporary re-configuration was implemented on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010. From that date two reception and assessment duty points have been in operation in the county.

The North Reception and Assessment Service covers, Bassetlaw, Newark and Mansfield and is based at Bevercotes House, The E Village, Ollerton.

**Telephone:** 01623 520520.

The South Reception and Assessment Service cover Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe and is based at Sir John Robinson Way, Daybrook, Nottingham.

**Telephone:** 0115 8546356.

## The new arrangements for the examination of children from Bassetlaw District alleging sexual abuse/assault from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010

### **1. Acute sexual assault in young people aged 13 to 16 years (or 16 to 18 years if vulnerable, e.g. Disabled or Looked After Child)**

- Police to contact the 'Consultant Paediatrician on call for Child Protection' at QMC switchboard, Tel: 0115 9249924.
- Discussion with Paediatrician re need for medical, and timing.
- Child to be seen at the Nottingham Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).
- Joint examination with Forensic Medical Examiner (FME) arranged by police.
- Report to be provided by the Paediatrician with follow up if necessary arranged in Bassetlaw.

### **2. Acute sexual assault in young people aged under 13 years**

- Police to contact the Consultant Paediatrician on call at BDGH on 01909 500990.

- Discussion with Paediatrician re need for a medical, and timing.
- Child to be seen at BDGH.
- Joint examination with FME arranged.
- Report to be provided by Paediatrician/FME (still to be agreed) with follow up if necessary arranged in Bassetlaw Hospital or Community as required.

**3. All non acute/historical sexual abuse allegations under 16 years (or 16 to 18 years if vulnerable, e.g. Disability or Looked After Child)**

- As per 2 above (FME role to be confirmed)

The service will be reviewed by December 2010. The review will be led by NHS Bassetlaw.

**The next publication of the NSCB Newsletter will be September 2010.  
Copies of this newsletter are available from  
[www.nottsccl.gov.uk/nscb](http://www.nottsccl.gov.uk/nscb).**