

Consultation

CoramBAAF response to consultation on Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance

6 September 2023

Section 1: A shared endeavour

8. Do you agree that we should change the title of Working Together to reflect help and protection for children and families?

Not Answered

9. To what extent do you agree that the four principles are the right ones to drive better practice and engagement with parents?

Not Answered

10. To what extent do you think the new practice principles for multi-agency working will support leaders and practitioners to work together more effectively and improve outcomes for children and their families?

Not Answered

11. Is there anything else you want to comment on in A Shared Endeavour?

A shared endeavour comments:

Within the principles about driving better practice and engagement with parents it is important that practitioners feel able and confident to name directly with parents the concerns that professionals may have about the child or children in the family. This is to help parents understand the concerns that professionals have. It is also to help parents understand what professionals feel may need to change and how this can happen. This is named under principle (iii) which says: “helping parents to understand what the issues are, what decisions could be made, what changes need to be made, why and how, timescales and possible outcomes”. In our view this is vital and should be given more prominence.

There is nothing in the principles about practice and engagement with parents about remaining child focussed and focused on the child’s needs during this engagement. It is, of course, likely that to meet a child’s needs that parental needs may also need to be addressed. However, the need to remain child focussed during engagement seems an omission from the principles. A theme of a number of serious case reviews and child safeguarding practice review panel reports has been professionals not focussing enough on a child’s lived experience or focussing too greatly on the needs of adults over the needs of the child. Maintaining a child focus whilst working in partnership with parents is essential in not losing sight of the child and whatever may be happening for them. Keeping child focussed also aids practitioners in bringing to the foreground of any partnership work with parents or carers why agencies



will be involved with this family. In many ways being child focussed can be the key to effective partnership working and may be an area where most common ground to work together can be found. One of the key issues in terms of practice is acknowledging and supporting the relational world of 'working together'. Trust, openness, discussion and empathy are important in the approach with the family and that requires appropriate skills and knowledge of social workers and others.

Section 2: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

12. To what extent do you agree that these proposed changes provide greater clarity on what the expectations are of safeguarding partners?

Not Answered

13. To what extent do you agree with the list of joint functions of Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners?

Not Answered

14. In your local area, how would delegation from the lead safeguarding partner to delegated safeguarding partner be interpreted and delivered in practice?

How would delegation from the lead safeguarding partner to delegated safeguarding partner be interpreted and delivered in practice?

15. To what extent do you agree that having a mutually agreed representative from a safeguarding partner agency will increase ownership and accountability of partners?

Agree

16. To what extent do you agree that these proposed changes will strengthen the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements?

Agree

17. To what extent do you agree that making education a statutory safeguarding partner is the only way to secure the right level of collaboration in multi-agency arrangements?

Agree

18. Do you agree with the proposed changes to encourage more engagement with VCSE and sports clubs as part of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements?

No - additional guidance is needed for safeguarding partners

19. To what extent do you agree that these proposed changes will make multi-agency arrangements more accountable and transparent?

Agree

20. Is there anything else you want to comment on in Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements?

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements comments:



Section 3: Help and support for children and their families

21. To what extent do you agree that these changes will strengthen whole family working and tailored support for children and families ahead of wider system reforms?

Agree

22. Do you agree that the features we have outlined for Family Group Conferences will improve family network engagement in decision making and supporting children?

Not Answered

23. Do you agree that the proposed changes will help to improve the outcomes of children and their families who receive support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989?

Don't know

24. Do the proposed provisions for the role of the social worker qualified practice supervisor or manager ensure appropriate social work oversight?

Not Answered

25. In your opinion, are there practitioners who should not be lead practitioners?

Not Answered

Practitioners who should not be lead practitioners:

26. Do you agree with the proposed changes to strengthen assessment and support for disabled children?

Not Answered

27. Does the new information clarify the role of children's social care in the assessment of suitability for a MBU placement?

Not Answered

28. To what extent do you agree these changes will give practitioners across all agencies and organisations, a clearer understanding of the work HMPPS do and the contribution HMPPS makes to keeping children safe?

Agree

29. Is there anything else you want to comment on in Help and support for children and families?

Help and support for children and families comments:

Re: Mother and Baby Units: 27. Does the new information clarify the role of children's social care in the assessment of suitability for a MBU placement?

To some degree but the core issues are developing a supportive and empathetic relationship with the mother.



Re: Prison and Probation Services: 28. To what extent do you agree these changes will give practitioners across all agencies and organisations a clearer understanding of the work HMPPS do 41 and the contribution HMPPS makes to keeping children safe?

With full implementation - agree

Section 4: Decisive, multi-agency child protection

30. To what extent do you agree these standards will be effective in supporting improved multi-agency child protection work?

Agree

31. To what extent do you agree that the proposed changes make clear that the multi-agency safeguarding response applies when harm, or risk of harm, comes from outside the home, including online?

Agree

32. To what extent do you agree that the updated section ‘supporting children at risk of or experiencing harm outside the home’ makes clear what practitioners need to consider in supporting this group of children?

Agree

33. Is there anything else you want to comment on in Decisive multi-agency child protection?

Decisive multi-agency child protection comments:

Section 5: Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents

34. Will it be feasible for your local authority to submit notifications for the deaths of care leavers aged 18-25?

Not Answered

35. Is there anything else you want to comment on in Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents?

Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents comments:

The judiciary are not included when it comes to consideration of serious child safeguarding incidents through child safeguarding practice reviews and we are aware of cases where judges have been invited to contribute to reviews but have declined to do so. This leaves a deficit in opportunities to consider accountability and learning for the judiciary and for local authorities to understand how their presentation of cases has affected the outcome. There are instances where children have experienced harm following a decision of the family court. By not including the judiciary as a partner agency in any reviews there is a real risk that the judiciary will not be able to learn the important lessons from an incident, nor will local authorities learn about how their presentation may have affected the outcome of the case. This is an important opportunity that could be missed, which, if the judiciary were included in relevant safeguarding practice reviews, may result in better outcomes for other children.

There is a separate issue of accountability. CoramBAAF is under no illusions of the gravity of decision making in the family courts and the important balance of judgement that the judiciary make day in day



out. However, it is also important that the judiciary through learning from serious child safeguarding incidents have similar accountability measures as partner agencies also involved in the safeguarding practice reviews. A challenge for the judiciary is in understanding the impact of their decisions on the children involved. There is currently no mechanism which provides judges with any follow-up of the impact of their decisions on a child. Learning from child safeguarding incidents would be one way that the judiciary could learn more about the impact of decisions in some of the most challenging situations. Whilst this may be uncomfortable there no doubt would be useful learning, development and practice for fellow judges to consider from this.