

Hugh Connor
Chair
Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
18 Ormeau Avenue
Belfast
BT2 8HS

17 July 2013

Dear Hugh

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Strategic Plan 2013-2016

NICCY has engaged extensively in legislative and policy debates concerning the establishment of the Safeguarding Board and while we do not, in general, respond to strategic plan consultations by relevant authorities we would note a number of concerns that should be considered in the document. Before outlining these, NICCY would highlight our welcome for the recognition in the draft plan of the obligations placed on the Board by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is important to acknowledge that the Safeguarding Board is a newly established body which must focus on developing and embedding robust procedures and processes in line with fulfilling its core statutory functions. As NICCY has noted previously, research assessing equivalent bodies in England has identified that boards were more effective in their first years of operation when they concentrated on the 'core business' of child protection and ensured they only expanded into other areas of safeguarding following this and as and when resources permitted.¹

Two functions reflecting such 'core' duties which are designated to the Safeguarding Board and are not within the remit of other agencies relate to Case Management Reviews (CMRs) and child death reviews. NICCY has had a particular interest in these duties throughout the development of the Board and it is vital that work related to these resource intensive functions becomes well established and ensures there is effective implementation of learning from cases and reviews. As the Safeguarding Board is aware, NICCY has repeatedly expressed concern about the delay in commencing its duty to review information concerning the deaths of children and young people and notes the urgency with which this function should be established. Further to this, as

¹ France A. et al (2010) The Evaluation of Arrangements for effective Operation of the new Local Safeguarding Children Boards in England (London: DCSF).



previously discussed, NICCY notes our interest in engaging directly with the Board and others in the development of this work.

In commenting further on work related to CMRs and child death reviews, NICCY would highlight the importance of the Safeguarding Board progressing recommendations from 'Still Vulnerable: The Impact of Early Childhood Experiences on Adolescent Suicide and Accidental Death'² where the Board is named as a duty bearer. 'Still Vulnerable' was commissioned by NICCY in direct response to our review of CMR information and the recommendations identify practical measures to strengthen arrangements to safeguard children who have been subject to abuse and adversity and mitigate against risks of suicide, early death and other poor outcomes. NICCY welcomes inclusion of the need to address multiple adversities in the body of the document and within priority 1.4 but notes that the Board should also take action in regard to the recommendation on improving the coordination of case planning for young people in need of services and support, particularly where they are not placed on the Child Protection Register or designated with 'looked after' status.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Safeguarding Board and do not hesitate to contact my office if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Lewsley-Mooney". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely" text.

Patricia Lewsley-Mooney
Commissioner for Children and Young People

² Devaney J. Et al (2012) Still Vulnerable: The Impact of Early Childhood Experiences on Adolescent Suicide and Accidental Death, (Belfast: NICCY).