

NSPCC

Response to

DCSF Consultation on 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy

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Please tick one box that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Directors of Children's Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Directors of Children and Learners	<input type="checkbox"/> School Workforce
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<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education College staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Work and Care Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Educational Needs Workforce
<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Practitioners	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports and Culture Workforce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

Please Specify:

Voluntary sector

General Comments.

1. The NSPCC made a number of comments about workforce in our submission to Lord Laming's Review of Child Protection. We have for simplicity appended all our recommendations (see Appendix A) and made reference to some specific ones in our response.
2. One of our key concerns is about ensuring there are sufficient resources to develop a competent and confident workforce. We were therefore concerned by the recent findings from the "Learn to Care" survey on social

care workforce expenditure¹. The report commented “*There is a clear mis-match between last year’s expectations and this year’s reality for the retention of workforce grants in both adult and children’s sectors. In last year’s [2007] survey, about 7 in 10 “Learn to Care” members estimated they would be able to retain all of their workforce development grants. In this year’s survey, just 2 in 10 members actually secured all the National Training Strategy and Human Resources Development grants....*” The actual figures for 2007-08 show that, “*the children’s sector was able to retain an average of just 30% of their National Training Strategy Grant and 30% of the Human Resources Development Strategy Grant for workforce development in social care.*” The grants made available for training and workforce development need to be used for this purpose.

3. There have been a number of announcements made by DCSF and CWDC, the most recent being about making social work a Masters level profession². There is a danger that they will not fit together but rather be seen as reacting to specific issues. It is important that any changes are coherent and be clear about how they fit into achieving the vision set out in the strategy.
4. The strategy will be a success if it enables children to be more willing to approach organisations for advice and support. We know that currently children are unlikely to approach a formal agency to ask for help.³ The research undertaken by DCSF / CWDC also reinforced the skills that a children’s worker needs to develop relationships with children and young people. The sign of success will be that between now and 2020 we see children reporting an increased confidence in talking to professionals and an increase in self referrals by children to agencies.

1 Do you support our vision for the children and young people’s workforce in 2020?

Yes

No

Not Sure

¹ Local government social care workforce development expenditure: a survey of trends and funding (2008) – Learn to Care 2009

² Speech to Social Work Taskforce Key Partners Group by Secretary of State for Childrens , Schools and Families March 5 2009

³ Featherstone, B and Evans, H (2004) *Children experiencing maltreatment: who do they turn to?* A summary of research and findings, NSPCC.

Comments:

The vision is in accord with the outcomes set under Every Child Matters. The one weakness is that it is not set within the context of a children's rights framework. Whilst some of the rights are implicit in the strategy, the NSPCC believes that any strategy should be fully rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We welcome the explicit statement about the workforce needing to work in partnership with children / young people and their families.

2 Do you agree with the priorities we have set out for addressing issues that affect the whole workforce? How can you help to achieve them?

Agree

Disagree

X Not sure

Comments:

The priorities are helpful, but we believe the first priority should be that "The workforce is able to meet the needs of all children and young people and **especially those who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes.**" (para 3.1). All the other priorities become redundant if the workforce is unable to meet the needs of children.

Significantly, in "Building Brighter futures " (DCSF 2008), comment was made about needing to consider workforce diversity (para 3.47). However there is no reference to considering issues of equality and diversity in this strategy. Whilst this might be inferred by references to all children, the NSPCC considers such issues should be explicitly stated alongside appropriate references to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and 2005) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. A diverse workforce is important if services are going to be able to provide a high quality and sensitive service to all communities.

We provide some specific comments under each of the bullet points.

- *The children and young people's workforce has strong leaders and managers.* We have previously welcomed this in our response to the consultation on the Guidance for Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members.(NSPCC Feb 2009) We consider that the issue raised in paragraph 3.11 about opportunities to learn in other sectors is important.

There is a danger that it will focus only on the statutory organisations and we would highlight the importance of ensuring that such opportunities are also

available for third sector organisations both large and small.

One issue that is not considered in the paper is about the emphasis on managerialism. In our response to Lord Laming⁴ we said: “There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest there is an over-emphasis on managerialism, targets, form-filling and procedures being an end in themselves, all of which have a negative impact on professional practice. Our projects have told us that:

“The primary focus of local authorities is on meeting targets ...” and “... the target-driven culture is destroying sound professional judgement among managers in children’s social services.

This needs to be addressed, as professionals’ responses are affected by the leadership and support they receive. We welcome the approach adopted by the Audit Commission of reducing the overall score in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment if a council is not doing well in its delivery of children’s or adult services. We would hope that approach would be continued under the new approach to start in April 2009.

- *Recruitment routes encourage people to join the children and young people’s workforce.*

The strategy focuses on recruitment of those currently in schools and colleges. Social work has until recently recruited from a pool of people who were older and generally had gained a bit of life experience as this had an important bearing on their ability to cope with the issues they dealt with. So whilst supporting the plans to promote the children’s workforce within schools, colleges etc, there needs to be an equal emphasis on other groups. A workforce that reflects all sections of the community is important for ensuring that children and young people have the choice of being able to talk to someone who understands their life experience and culture.

We would therefore encourage the DSCF and the CWDC to also consider other routes to target potential recruits, such as people already volunteering, those considering career changes and, importantly, people who have been service users.

- *Everyone who works with children and young people understands what it means to be a member of the children and young people’s workforce and understands the roles of others.*

The NSPCC concurs with the evidence produced by the Expert Group and would reinforce the point that this needs to be inclusive of the third and private sectors. Para 3.29 which relates to the opportunities that people in the workforce will need is important. Achieving that will require significant investment between now and 2020 in pre and post-qualifying training, developing existing as well as new tools to support front-line practice and in ensuring that salaries are suitable for the jobs.

- *Shared values and common core of skills and knowledge*

We endorse the need to revisit the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and the explicit requirement that people are clear about their, and others', safeguarding responsibilities. We also welcome the statements about encouraging joint induction (paras 3.44).

- *Everyone in the workforce is safe to work with children and young people and should understand their responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people, and what to do if they are concerned.*
- *Qualifications, training and progression routes enable people to get the skills they need to do their jobs, improve their practice and develop their careers.*
- *The workforce is able to meet the needs of all children and young people, including those who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes.*

In our submission to Lord Laming we said “*At the core of an effective safeguarding system there should be a workforce that is fully staffed, well trained and well supported. Good quality relationships between the child, their parents and the professionals working with them are vital in most cases for a child to be protected and to do well.*” We made a number of detailed recommendations on training and support.⁵ A number are dealt with here, such as ensuring that all sectors have access to training. Fundamentally, all 3 million people employed in the children’s workforce (DCSF estimates) should have an understanding of what safeguarding and child protection is, what their role is within it and what actions they would need to take if they are concerned about a child.

We also want to highlight the importance of good frontline management in achieving this. The strategy recognises the need to strengthen middle management and above, but we believe it is first-line managers who are vital in ensuring that the right things happen, at the right time, to ensure children are safe. We would therefore like to see some focus on how they will be supported. Issues such as training to development the appropriate management skills, alongside the skills of supervising complex cases need to be addressed.

The NSPCC’s Training and Consultancy service works across the UK to deliver a range of services to promote understanding of child protection and safeguarding. We have developed a range of resources for different groups, such as EduCare which is an online set of training modules for people in the education sector, and CPD training for paediatricians in collaboration with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. We would be happy to work with the CWDC and other bodies to ensure that there is a quality set of resources to assist in training the workforce.

3 Do you find the tables in Annexes B and C (see the download of the full version of the document 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy) setting out what integrated working means for different people in the workforce helpful?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The tables do provide a useful reference as to how the system should operate. Appendix C is especially important as it provides a model that can be understood by children and families.</p> <p>For appendix B it would be helpful to provide examples of other adult service workers such as drugs and alcohol misuse workers and psychiatrists, to emphasise the role that adult services play in safeguarding children.</p>		

4 What does the strategy – including the vision – mean for how you do your job now, and what your profession will need to look like by 2020? What does it mean for how you will work with other people in the workforce?

<p>Comments:</p> <p>It is hard for us to comment in detail on this question, as the newly established Social Work Taskforce will be publishing findings and recommendations on the development of social work and it has not yet reported. The NSPCC welcomes the setting up of the Social Work Taskforce. Its focus on frontline practice is important. The announcement that one of its first priorities will be to carry out a review of the effectiveness of the Integrated Children's System and the IT used by social workers to keep records of their cases is helpful.</p> <p>Improving frontline practice requires a coordinated and multi-level response. A number of elements have been developed such as the CAF and the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge. These do need to be embedded and used consistently across the whole workforce.</p> <p>Addressing weaknesses in pre-qualifying courses, along with giving attention to post-qualifying training, is important if the vision is to be achieved. We recommended in our response to Lord Laming that "<i>continued professional registration for social workers and health professionals should be linked to evidence of completion of a minimum level of relevant specialist and continued professional development in safeguarding.</i>"</p>
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In our view the strategy will have been effective if we see more children coming forward to a formal agency directly to ask for support. For that to happen, all staff will need to be:

- Skilled at engaging with children and being able to work with them;
- Confident to deal with the issues that a child / young person raises;
- Understand their role;
- Able to help a child / parent to evaluate options;
- If required, be able to take the right action to help safeguard a child.

This is a skill set that we believe does exist but needs to become the norm for all professionals working in the sector, not only for certain parts of the sector or for certain levels of responsibility within the sector.

If the strategy is successful, then we would expect to see a difference at a local level, with practitioners being enabled to take decisions and in certain contexts hold budgets which would allow quick decision-making and quick action. In this context roles such as the lead professional are vital, and we would expect that they would become the norm. The current review of lead professionals and the CAF will need to deal with the issues about inconsistency if these tools are to be successful and support good practice.

The changes will also mean that staff will be confident about knowing what to disclose to other agencies, seeking consent for this and knowing when to disclose without consent. They will use a range of means to communicate with children, parents and colleagues, including SMS and email, as well as face to face. The IT systems will be in place to support good practice and to help practitioners evaluate their work; a by-product will be the availability of information to assist agencies and the Children's Trust to assess need and plan for services.

5 Will the strategy help you address the challenges facing you (as an individual member of the workforce, as an organisation or as a Children's Trust) now and in the future? What else do Government and its national partners need to take into account in the further plans we develop?

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

Government and national partners need to ensure that:

- Appropriate levels of resources are allocated and actually spent on workforce development;
- All sectors of the workforce, but especially children's social care and early years, need to be valued. If vacancy rates are to be reduced then there will need to be a long term and high profile campaign to promote the value and importance of these roles in supporting and protecting children.
- Government departments model the integration that they are calling for at a local level. There have been some good examples, such as HM Government guidance on information sharing, but this should become the norm and not the exception.
- Government and national partners ensure that any new tools they develop and require agencies to use are fit for purpose.
- Government ministers and officials set out simple routes whereby they are able to listen to the voices and views of children, young people, their carers and frontline practitioners on a consistent basis. We welcome initiatives such as the DCSF Young Persons Board.
- Ownership and accountability for various strands are made clear. For example LSCBs should be required to demonstrate that they provide a sufficient range and depth of child protection training to meet the learning outcomes of different audiences as defined in the guidance issued with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and, where necessary, to prepare an action plan for improving access to inter-agency safeguarding training. We know that the availability of inter-agency training is very variable and is linked to the resources allocated to and by different LSCBs to meet local needs. This also needs to be addressed.

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NSPCC Recommendations to Lord Laming on workforce issues⁶

3.1.1 A special Ministerial Task Force should be established reporting in Cabinet to identify the reforms needed to establish a safeguarding and protecting children from significant harm competence across the entire workforce that works with, or regularly comes into contact with, children and young people. This taskforce will need to cut across the sectoral skills councils relating in particular to care, health and leisure. It will need to review the duties of Children's Trusts to ensure that appropriate workforce development and multi-agency training is provided locally to national requirements. It should address all of the workforce development recommendations in inspection reports over the last five years, and the recommendations set out in the overviews of SCRs and those of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry that have not been implemented.

If a taskforce were established many of the following recommendations would become part of its considerations. If not, they stand as set out.

3.1.2 We recommend the production of an integrated workforce development and training programme and action plan for safeguarding children including, explicitly, their protection from significant harm. This should form part of the Staying Safe Action Plan and the children's workforce development plans. It should also be informed by the training and workforce-related recommendations from serious case reviews and inspection reports. We note that a similar recommendation was made in the Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report and was never implemented.

3.1.3 For the core workforce, professional qualifying training should be reviewed by a sub group to ensure that:

- The curriculum prepares professionals for their child protection roles and responsibilities;
- It includes mandatory child protection elements, which are assessed;
- The content is up to date and fit for purpose;
- Training is delivered by educators with the necessary knowledge and practice experience; and
- It equips professionals to question the opinions of other professionals (Victoria Climbié Inquiry recommendations 37 and 100).

3.1.4 Completion of the appropriate level of safeguarding training for paediatricians with three-yearly refreshers should be both mandatory and a requirement of professional registration. New introductory training on child protection has been developed for paediatricians by the RCPCH and the NSPCC. More recently, the RCPCH, Advanced Life Saving Group and the NSPCC have developed an advanced level online training programme. This would fulfil recommendation 84 of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry.

3.1.5 CORE-info materials should be widely distributed to all paediatricians to ensure they are familiar with the best available evidence on injuries to children. The NSPCC and Cardiff University have published CORE information leaflets based on the systematic review of evidence in relation to physical injuries of children. This includes a new leaflet on spinal injuries directly relevant to the injuries experienced by Baby P.

3.1.6 Continued professional registration for social workers and health professionals should be linked to evidence of completion of a minimum level of relevant specialist and continued professional development in safeguarding. Currently it is not specified what training must be completed. This would require the development of a framework of learning outcomes for different roles and responsibilities (see below).

3.1.7 A structured framework of continued professional development and competences for undertaking particular professional roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children should be developed for each part of the core children's workforce. This would build on the foundations of the common core of knowledge and skills. At present there is non-statutory guidance on learning outcomes for different professions and this could provide the basis of a progressive framework linked to registration and to the types of work someone is considered competent to undertake at different stages of professional development. This should fulfil a number of the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (eg recommendations 15, 20, 31, 39, 87, 90).

3.1.8 The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is currently piloting a structured framework of supported development for newly qualified social workers and for their next two to three years of practice. **This approach should be developed further to specify the competences relating to safeguarding responsibilities.**

3.1.9 Continuing professional development for social workers and health visitors. Practical micro-skills training is needed to assist workers in handling difficult situations – for example, weighing up cumulative evidence of risk in long-term cases, how to take a history, how to insist on seeing a child alone, how to work with resistant parents/children, how to check for injuries and when a medical opinion is required. This should be based on asking social workers what they find most challenging and should be delivered in the workplace by experienced practitioners.

3.1.10 Allocated workloads should be appropriate to the level of experience, training and competence of the practitioner.

3.1.11 Supervision. All those working with children at risk of serious harm should have access to professional advice and supervision by someone with the

necessary knowledge and skills. Mentoring and peer support from experienced colleagues is a valuable supplement to formal supervision.

3.1.12 There should be mandatory training on supervision for first line managers, which should cover not only general skills in supervising and managing staff, but also the in-depth knowledge and skills to make judgements and decisions in cases where there are child protection concerns.

3.1.13 There should be a specific module for those accountable for decision-making in relation to individual children that is focused on safeguarding children – currently *Leading and Managing Children’s Services in England* – a national professional development framework takes a broad approach to developing managers to meet all five ECM outcomes.

3.1.14 LSCBs should be required to demonstrate that they provide a sufficient range and depth of training to meet the learning outcomes of different audiences as defined in the guidance issued with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and, where necessary, to prepare an action plan for improving access to inter-agency safeguarding training. The availability of inter-agency training is very variable and is linked to the resources allocated by different LSCBs to meet local needs. The NSPCC, through its Partners in Inter-Agency Training (PIAT) programme supports a national network of inter-agency LSCB trainers. (More detail is provided in Appendix A)

Through this network we are aware that:

- Inter-agency training is seriously under-resourced in many places.
- At the current rate of progress in most areas it will take many years to provide all those in the core workforce with access to the inter-agency training specified in the *Working Together* guidance. In one area it was estimated that to provide multi-disciplinary training for all designated teachers would take approximately 60 years.
- There is limited access to training for those in the wider workforce.

3.1.15 A more systematic review of needs in relation to work with children at risk of significant harm should be commissioned by the CWDC. There are some **very positive examples of comprehensive and properly resourced training strategies**, including innovative programmes to reach the voluntary and community sectors. **These examples should be widely disseminated for example by Regional Government Offices or through the PIAT network.**

3.1.16 Training needs to be accredited against agreed standards and learning outcomes. There is currently no agreed or national process for accrediting safeguarding training against agreed standards and learning outcomes. This should be explored in order to raise standards, and improve the consistency and transferability of learning.

The wider workforce

3.1.17 Organisations need to **ensure that safeguarding is an element of the induction of all those in contact with children and families.** Guidance and materials are widely available now; the challenge is to make sure that employers are using these systematically and have processes in place for monitoring that this happens.

3.1.18 **There should be refresher training for the wider workforce every three years,** as there is for health and safety, recognising that these people will not routinely be seeing child protection concerns and awareness levels and vigilance will drop.

3.1.19 **It is important to ensure that those with designated safeguarding roles in voluntary and community settings have access to appropriate training to fulfil their roles.** The numbers requiring this training are enormous and many of these organisations have limited resources. LSCBs should ensure sufficient local provision for those in designated roles.

3.1.20 **Primary care trusts should be required by statutory guidance to ensure that child protection training is carried out in all GP practices at least once every three years.** This would fulfil Recommendation 87 of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, which stated that all GPs should receive training in the recognition of deliberate harm to children. New introductory training on child protection has now been developed by the RCGP and the NSPCC for use in practices with the whole practice team. However, uptake of this training is optional and has been relatively slow.

3.1.21 **Schools should undertake whole-school training sessions at least every two years** on different aspects of safeguarding to maintain awareness and vigilance.

3.1.22 **Sport: a comprehensive safeguarding training and development strategy has recently been developed by the Child Protection in Sport Unit and this should be implemented with the necessary resources.**

3.1.23 **We need to create organisational cultures and processes that support staff and encourage critical questioning.** Retaining, developing and supporting experienced and skilled staff in practice is critical to the safety and wellbeing of children. Training and continuing professional development are only one part of this.

We should:

- Learn from good practice and organisations that are succeeding in retaining practitioners and managers;
- Use buddying and mentoring for newly qualified staff;
- Support joint/paired working both as a means of shared learning but also to help manage high-risk or complex, challenging, long-term cases;
- Use action learning sets and case discussions to promote shared learning;
- Provide casework supervision that encourages critical reflection on individual cases;
- Recognise, value and promote examples of good practice;
- Guard against a defensive retreat into excessive paperwork.