

# **A CONSULTATION ON THE COMMON CORE OF SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING AND VALUES FOR THE CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE IN SCOTLAND**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**The Scottish Government is seeking views on the common core of skills, knowledge & understanding and values for all those working with children, young people and families. Once implemented the common core will support the development of more effective and integrated services which in turn will promote more flexible development and career progression for the workforce and will make communicating across organisational boundaries and cultures easier.**

# A Consultation on the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the Children's Workforce in Scotland



## RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

### 1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

NSPCC Scotland

Title Mr  Ms  Mrs  Miss  Dr  *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

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### 3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

*Please tick as appropriate*

Group/Organisation

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

*Please tick as appropriate*  Yes  No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

*Please tick ONE of the following boxes*

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

*Please tick as appropriate*  Yes  No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

*Please tick as appropriate*

Yes

No

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

### **1. Workers need to intervene early, tackle inequalities and build the capacity of children, young people and families.**

**To what extent do you agree that the proposed common core equips our workers to do this?**

NSPCC Scotland agrees that early intervention, tackling inequalities and building capacity are crucial in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people. The Common Core provides a basic comprehensive framework which will enable individuals working with children and young people to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.

However, it is not clear whether the common core would be distinguished by level and job role, whether the worker is part of the core or wider workforce or how relevant the common core is to volunteers, particularly those who volunteer for very short periods of time. Similarly, different levels of skills and knowledge related to different job roles. It is important that complexities and subtleties are not diminished by the application of a generic skill set universally implemented across a diverse and multifaceted 'children's workforce'.

Looking at the 'proposed benefits' of the Common Core, set out in pages ten and eleven of the consultation document, it could arguably be perceived that the purpose of the Common Core is to improve integrated working rather than being at the heart of working with children. The values, knowledge and skills need to be owned, understood and applied by all workers, and this therefore requires all sectors to sign up and apply it.

### **2. What specific comments do you have around the skills, knowledge & understanding associated with “sound observation, judgement and decision making?”**

Whilst it is vital that the children's workforce is equipped to identify and respond to issues which may arise, it is equally important that workers feel supported, and in receipt of appropriate training to ensure that they feel empowered and confident in their decision making.

We welcome the inclusion of babies', children's and young people's development as an important area of workers' knowledge and understanding. Similarly, we welcome recognition of the advantages of early intervention.

We believe that this section could better reflect the complexity and sophistication of the skills required to engage with children at risk. Areas such as risk assessment and confidentiality can be extremely complex and so need to be more fully explored if the workforce is to develop appropriate skills in these areas.

Similarly, we believe that an ability to interpret children's experiences, and understand how these are likely to affect outcomes, is of the utmost importance to ensure that workers are able to contextualised observations and identify the most appropriate course of action which will deliver the desired outcomes for children.

**3. What specific comments do you have around the skills and knowledge associated with “appropriate and effective communication”?**

Good communication is central to working with children, young people and their families and we agree that it must be a fundamental part of the common core.

To enable the Scottish Government to meet its aim to ‘put the child or young person and their rights at the heart of all that they do’, the Common Core must involve children, young people and those caring for them in the design and delivery of services and decisions that affect them. Therefore, we believe that ‘listening to children and young people’ should be included as a core communication skill to ensure that children are not seen as passive recipients of support, but as active participants who are consulted and have their opinions and perspectives considered from the outset.

A key part of effective communication and engagement is trust, both with children, young people and their carers, and between and within different sectors of the workforce. The development of positive and trusting relationships, so as to inform decision making, should also appear as a priority.

**4. What specific comments do you have around the skills, knowledge & understanding associated with “effective partnership and multi-agency working”?**

NSPCC Scotland believes that working in partnership with and empowering parents is an essential part of delivering the best possible outcomes for children and young people especially if the Government is to meet its aim to “significantly improve the wellbeing and opportunities for Scotland’s children, young people and families”, as set out in page 4 of the consultation document. We would like to see the children’s workforce engage in ‘effective partnership’ with parents and other significant adults where appropriate to ensure a holistic approach to delivering child protection where possible.

**5. What if anything is missing from the skills, knowledge & understanding or values?**

We have set out above areas where we feel the Common Core could be added to and improved.

In addition, it is not clear how the Common Core differentiates between skills needed when working with children and those required when working with young people. The framework could benefit from referring to children and young people throughout, recognising that different skills and approaches may be required when working with older children. This is particularly important in terms of communicating with young people and their participation in decisions which affect them.

It is also vital that the Common Core aligns with the various existing policy frameworks to avoid disconnection between policy priorities and to ensure that implementation is thorough and effective. A clearer description of how the skills identified relate to Equally Well, Achieving Our Potential and Early Years and other values frameworks such as GIRFEC would be valuable. While these policies are referred to in the consultation document, the links could be more explicit to ensure that the Common Core is adopted and embedded in to all sections of the children's workforce.

## Implementation of the proposed Common Core

6. Describe briefly how, your organisation, or your sector might implement the common core of skills, knowledge and values?

### Questions 6 – 9: implementation

NSPCC Scotland reflects many of the skills, knowledge and understanding identified within the Common Core in our recruitment and selection processes. Induction, training, job descriptions and workforce development strategies have been standardised across the NSPCC to embed a working together approach from the outset. Value Based Interviewing has also been used for over 4 years to create alignment between organisational and individual values.

We are committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for children and would therefore embrace the opportunity to share learning with other agencies where we have particular expertise. Conversely, we will evaluate and adjust our own procedures and practices where necessary to ensure that we better incorporate the values and behaviours contained within the Common Core.

The NSPCC considers that the Common Core has much to offer in terms of supporting the workforce. However, this is dependent on effective implementation. To be effective, the emphasis now needs to be on communicating the purpose of the Common Core, and ensuring that the skills, knowledge and values it sets out are used in practice throughout the whole of the children's workforce.

More detail is required on how the Scottish Government will implement the Common Core to ensure that it is embedded in all sectors of the children's workforce. The Common Core applies across all sectors however, it is vital that this is well understood, particularly by those workers who may not consider it relevant to their day to day work.

The Common Core must be well-embedded in all parts of the workforce, such as health sector and the police, and not just seen as the domain of social work and education. We would also add that the sport and leisure sector plays a significant role in children's lives, and so the Common Core should be seen as relevant to such work. A clear communication strategy therefore needs to be in place across all relevant sectors to promote the importance of its use.

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### **Implementation of the proposed Common Core**

7. What opportunities are there in your organisation or service for the proposed common core to be implemented at the following 3 levels?

- Strategic management
- Operational Management
- Day to day working with children, young people and families

8. What opportunities do you see for working collaboratively with other organisations/sectors to implement the common core?

9. What challenges can you identify around implementing the common core, and how might these be overcome?