



Submission by Nagalro

**GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REVISED
SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE**

4 September 2012

Nagalro
PO Box 264
Esher
Surrey
KT10 0WA

Tel: 01372 818504
Fax: 01372 818505

Email: nagalro@globalnet.co.uk



GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REVISED SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE

Working Together to Safeguard Children

Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families

Statutory guidance on learning and improvement

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name Nagalro

Organisation (if applicable)

Address: See front sheet

Please indicate one category which best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/> Local Safeguarding Children Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Police
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Child/Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary Community Sector
<input type="checkbox"/> Other X		and

Please Specify:

Nagalro is the professional association for Family Court Advisers, Child Guardians and Independent Social Workers.

It has approximately 700 full members in England and Wales who represent interests of children in a range of public and private law proceedings. About work for the Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service (Cafc Many also act as Independent Social Workers providing expert witness reports a wide range of complex cases coming before the courts.

Members also undertake work in a variety of roles for example with foster agencies and in independent therapeutic practice. Members have significant experience as managers, chairs of Adoption Panels and other specialist social work practitioner roles and as therapists.

The revision of statutory guidance is an important part of the reforms taking place across the child protection system. Your views on these documents are welcome.

Working Together to Safeguard Children

1 Does the draft guidance make the essential legislative requirements clear - so all organisations know what the law says they and others must do? If not, please explain why and how you think the guidance should be made clearer.

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

2 Are any key requirements missing? If yes, please say in the comment box what is missing and where it should be in the document.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

3 Is the guidance clear enough on what Local Safeguarding Children Boards need to do to be effective? If not, please explain why.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

4 Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make

Comments:

Nagalro endorses and fully supports the submission of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Children in relation to Working Together.

Managing Individual Cases: the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families

5 Will local frameworks for assessment, which are timely and transparent, allow professionals to exercise their judgment and respond in a way that is proportionate to the needs of children and their families?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

6 Do you think that having an internal review point for completing assessments within your local framework, will provide sufficient control to avoid unacceptable delays for children? If not, how best might such control be achieved?

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

7 Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make

Comments:

Nagalro endorses and fully supports the submission of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Children in relation to Managing Individual cases: Framework for Assessment.

Learning and Improvement Guidance

8 Will the new arrangements for Serious Case Reviews lead to better learning which helps to prevent future harm to children? If not please say in the comment box how the guidance could be made clearer.

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

9 What needs to happen to ensure that there are enough people who are trained and qualified to conduct high quality Serious Case Reviews?

Comments:

10 What arrangements should be put in place to ensure the quality of reviews and share learning at a regional and national level?

Comments:

11 Will the revised guidance make any difference to the cost of Serious Case Reviews?

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

12 Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make

Comments:

The treatment of Serious Case Reviews is brief compared to the discussion on Child Death Reviews which is more procedural and specific. The positive aspects of the proposed guidance include:

- Clarity about the independence and qualifications of people undertaking SCRs
- Expected timescales (i.e. within 6 months - checklist)
- Notification to Ofsted of a SCR (but not with inspection or grading duties)
- An expectation that the final report, as a document for the public domain, will be less convoluted in an effort to avoid identification of families thus no chronologies or genograms. However such details can make information more accessible to the public 'holding LSCB's to account' while facts can enable a family to be identified in a local community even if certain personal information is removed. It is difficult if not impossible to protect families and retain a report that is not so diluted as to be completely anodyne.

Negative aspects are:

- The paper fails to give a real steer as to what a systems based approach to SCR's entails. Just three paragraphs mention it and refer readers to Munro's 2011 review without discussing the SCIE research or the pilot reports done in the North West which give a more practical account of what the process looks like. There is also a failure to explain what systemic methodology is, reference is simply made to the Munro report.
- The proposals suggest a 'standard typology of issues using an approved template' but give no suggestions as to what that might be. Brandon et al in their latest biennial review of SCR's (July 2012)¹ are alarmed about this because of the difficulty of continuity of collection of

¹ Brandon, M. et al New learning from serious case reviews: a two year report for 2009-2011: research brief (2012) pp 7-8.

research data.

- The paper makes only cursory acknowledgement of the need to involve families but without mention of how difficult this process is - and of being more specific about 'meeting the family's expectations' which appears somewhat at odds with the remit of the Review. BASPCAN has recently published research on the involvement of families in SCR's; some experienced social workers have argued that in practice this is a very delicate task with some reluctance on the part of local authorities to be honest with families in 'airing dirty linen' about what went wrong in how they were treated by agencies. It is also argued that some families still see SCRs as a 'whitewash' with a lot of 'back covering' that fails to provide answers to difficult questions.
- Brandon's research questions the voluminous number of recommendations resulting from SCRs.² However the Review provides no guidance about the quality or practical application of recommendations which can run to 50 or more - some of which are not always realistic.
- The review is overly laissez faire and does not demonstrate a clear understanding about a Systems Based approach in how Guidance is framed.

13 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, was it easy to find, understand, complete etc.).

Comments:

We endorse the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Children's comments,, below, which refers to their submission.

Please see Section 12 –paragraphs 12.1 – 12.3; in particular we would emphasis some difficulties with certain questions posed in the absence of sufficient information/detail.

Please also note our major concerns about the scope of the consultation and difficulties because of a lack of attention to public law proceedings and courts as a major audience for assessments and for whom timescales will have a major impact (see Section 9, paragraphs 9.1 -9.7; 9.8 -9.9)

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

² As above pp 6-7