

Barnardo's Scotland response to consultation on the National Framework for Child Protection Learning and Development in Scotland

Barnardo's Scotland works with more than 10,000 children, young people and their families in 98 specialised projects in 28 out of 32 Scottish Local Authorities. Every Barnardo's project is different but each believes in the potential in every child and young person, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through.

Barnardo's Scotland supports the concept of a competency framework for child protection learning and development and welcomes this document as a starting point.

We believe that there is a clear need to demonstrate that all those working with children should have knowledge and understanding of child protection and what must happen in order to safeguard children.

However, we would wish to make the following comments and suggestion to strengthen the framework in order that it is as effective and fit for purpose as possible.

Consultation Questions

Question (1): Multi-agency training

We are pleased that the document recognises the importance of multi-agency training and that Child Protection Committees (CPCs) have a lead role.

The provision of multi-agency training that Barnardo's has experienced has varied across the different CPCs in Scotland.

There are a number of examples of good practice being carried out in different CPCs, which should be replicated elsewhere. For example, Glasgow, provide comprehensive multi-agency training programmes, with their website detailing training in easily accessible multi-agency calendars. Some CPCs also have a named person responsible for training.

Unfortunately this is not true of all CPCs and in some areas we have seen limited or no multi-agency training on offer. We have also

experienced poor communication and information, which has meant that staff have not been aware of training available to them in their area. The Scottish Government should review examples of good practice and ensure they are disseminated throughout CPCs.

In some areas places for those in the voluntary/charity sector on training courses have also been very limited compared to places available to those in the statutory sector in some CPC areas meaning that staff have been unable to attend.

We have not always seen partners from adult services represented at multi-agency training events.

The Scottish Government needs to address the variable levels of multi-agency training available to ensure that all those working in child protection receive the training required to carry out their roles effectively.

Question (2): linking with other documents and strategies

The document would benefit from a statement which sets out clearly where this framework fits with other strategies and frameworks. We believe that this is essential and should be imbedded at the start of the document.

Barnardo's Scotland is pleased to see that the document makes references to GIRFEC and the 2010 National Child Protection Guidance. These references could be made more explicit to avoid the assumption of a certain level of knowledge, which the reader may not have, for example, an understanding of the eight wellbeing indicators set out by GIRFEC.

It would also be helpful if there were links to the range of other documents and policies which are of relevance including the Common Core, which the Government published on 18 June 2012. Considering the Common Core is designed to set out a range of skills, knowledge, understanding and values that should be common to everyone working with children, this is especially important.

Other documents and frameworks that should be referenced include the National Occupational Standards (NOS) developed by the Sector Skills Council, Getting our Priorities Right, which is currently being revised. It also makes no reference to the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) hosted by the Scottish Social Services Council. There is also no reference to children's rights within the document, which we believe there needs to be.

There is also little reference or explanation as to how this framework links in with further and higher education courses. This would be pertinent, as these courses should lead to the attainment of the competencies listed.

We are also concerned about how this document will be implemented into all continuing professional development and learning opportunities, as they vary greatly across the numerous different disciplines and professions involved in child protection, and can range from teachers to janitors and nurses to caterers.

Question (3): Framework Aims

The rationale for the framework is not clear. There is no vision or mission statement to buy into. The document appears as a series of statements, hopes and aspirations, which are laudable and sensible, but not new or strategic. The framework is very much an outline position, which doesn't go on to develop how it should be implemented.

It is our view that this document is caught between being a strategy document and a practical tool. As a result, we believe that it would be more beneficial to split it into two documents. The first should be the framework document, which should set out vision, strategy, aims as well as detailing how it should be implemented. The second should be an accompanying competencies document, which acts as a practical tool to support training and learning.

The challenge for many agencies is implementing continued professional development (CPD) plans. Many agencies are severely restricted by financing, staffing and time resources.

The document could be strengthened by more explicit reference to the required knowledge of adult service workers in relation to protecting children and young people. We also believe that there needs to be much more awareness-raising carried out with those working in adults services regarding how their roles may bring them into contact with children and what is expected of them to ensure that children are safe. Good practice in this area must also be highlighted.

Question (4 & 5): Good Practice Examples

We agree with the idea of using examples of good practice within the framework.

However, we found that the examples used in the draft framework to be inappropriate, not covering the relevant subject matter and significantly lacking in detail. They focused on individual learning in relation to situations that seem to be very clear and easily progressed from problem to successful outcome, and do not make any reference to existing multi-agency procedures. The examples are not reflective of the complexity of challenges faced by practitioners.

In addition, some of the language used in the examples when describing families was quite negative, inappropriate and labelling.

Barnardo's believes that part of the issue with the current examples in the framework stems from confusion over what the overall document is for and who it is aimed at.

We believe that if examples should be used, there should at least be one set at a strategic level, one set at a managerial level and one at a practitioner level and include evaluation and review of learning.

There was no example involving the voluntary sector. Considering the significant number of voluntary sector organisations working in this area it would be remiss not to include the sector in an example.

The Government should consider increasing the number of examples used throughout to reflect the wide range of sectors and professions covered by the framework. HMIe and Care Inspectorate reports highlight a range of good practice examples that may be useful.

Barnardo's Scotland would rate the examples a 4 on the scale given by the Scottish Government of 1 to 5 with 1 being very helpful and 5 being very unhelpful.

Question (6): Competencies

Barnardo's Scotland believes that is a good idea for the framework to be supported with competencies. However, we have a number of concerns regarding the draft list of competencies and the way they have been developed and used within the draft framework.

The list of competencies is simply a list and doesn't appear to have any clear structure or order. Many of the competencies are repetitive and sometimes confusing.

The use of language and terms such as 'understand' and 'aware' in the competencies is not clear. We recognise that an attempt to do

this has been made ahead of the list of competencies, but we believe that it is still not clear what is meant by these terms and that greater detail should be given to define them. The language needs to be much more authoritative and clear in setting out what skills and knowledge a worker must have and how they can achieve that skill.

The list of competencies as currently set out, appears to be based on statutory services and operations, and not third or other sector models of service delivery. This might make the framework difficult to apply to some organisations or roles. For example, an administrator may be defined by the framework as a member of the 'wider workforce', however, in Barnardo's services these staff members would be expected to have the knowledge required to respond appropriately to vulnerable children and so will need some of the competencies set out under the specialist workforce.

The competencies in the framework must reflect the multiple adversities faced by children; be reflective of the our growing understanding of harm and abuse in different circumstances as outlined in part 4 of the National Guidance for Child protection; our changing practice regarding registration at child protection case conferences and the increasing diversity of Scotland's population.

There is no clear indication in the document as to what occupations fall under each of the three different workforce headings, which leaves this decision open to considerable interpretation. To use the framework effectively, organisations would need to identify and plot the competencies required for each role. This would be a challenge for organisations without sufficient infrastructure and guidance to do so.

We believe that the framework would be more effective if competency profiles were created for different roles; for example competencies listed against social workers, teachers, and doctors. We understand that not every role would necessarily fall neatly into one of these types, but it would potentially offer clearer guidance than the workforce headings currently listed.

As stated earlier we believe that the current framework should be split into two documents. A strategic framework and a separate competencies document set-up as a tool kit would allow competencies to be developed in more depth, with clear details on how to achieve them, as well as look at specific roles and job types in much greater detail.

Question (7): Evaluation

Barnardo's Scotland is pleased to see evaluation given a high priority within the draft framework. However, the section was not as clear or succinct as we believe it could be.

With regards to the flow chart setting out the 4 stage approach, we believe this should be preceded by an additional stage identifying need and rationale for continued professional development. We also believe that this process would be better represented as cyclical rather than linear.

Evaluation of learning, development and training should always link back to outcomes for children. At present the document does not make this point clearly enough or show how this can be achieved.

Question (8): Other Comments

There is no reference to advocacy in the document or understanding of how advocacy roles and staff work with children. This needs to be developed and included in any such framework, as advocacy roles are increasing and often work very differently to other roles involved with working with children, and may require specific competencies that are not currently listed.

Equalities Issues

We do not believe that BME, disabilities, emerging populations and other groups are particularly well reflected within this framework. There should be specific mention of any additional skills and competencies required when working with these communities and consideration should also be given to how to provide continuous professional development opportunities to workers where English is not their first language.

For Further Information Contact:

Richard Meade, Public Affairs Officer, Barnardo's Scotland
T: 0131 314 6632 or E: richard.meade@barnardos.org.uk