



Tim Loughton MP

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To: Voluntary and Community Sector
Organisations

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Dear colleague,

MUNRO REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Just over a year ago, we established the Munro Review of Child Protection. This was the very first review commissioned by the Department for Education, underlining the enormous priority this Government places on improving child protection and helping children, young people and families. Today I am publishing the Government's response to the review.

From the start, we wanted the Munro Review of Child Protection to be different. That is why, unlike its predecessors, it was not commissioned as an immediate response to a specific crisis. That is why Professor Munro's final report – published in May – recommended that regulation and prescription are reduced rather than increased. And – most importantly of all – that is why it focused on the child, rather than the system.

In her final report, Professor Munro provided a very thorough analysis of the issues. The Government accepts her fundamental argument that the child protection system has lost its focus on the thing that matters most – the views and experiences of children themselves. We believe we need to move towards a child protection system with less central prescription and interference, where we place greater trust and responsibility in skilled professionals at the front line.

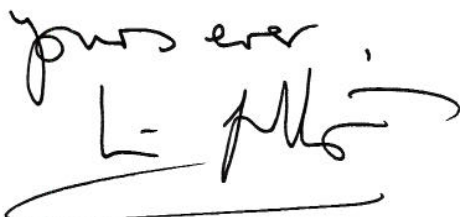
Today's Government response is not a one-off set of recommended solutions to be imposed from the centre. Rather, it is the start of a shift in mindset and relationship between central Government, local agencies and frontline professionals, working in partnership. We believe that local leaders, with their partners, should have the freedom to design and deliver services to improve outcomes, meet the needs of children and young people, and to account locally for those decisions and outcomes.

We have developed the response working with a cross-sector Implementation Working Group. We have been mindful of Professor Munro's advice not to 'cherry pick' reforms and to consider her recommendations in the round, looking at the whole system. Change will evolve and, as our response recognises, Government is in a position to move more quickly on some recommendations than on others. For example, we are convinced by the argument to remove statutory timescales for assessment, but we want such a move to be informed by the experiences of the four trial authorities, and five others where the Secretary of State is minded to extend the trial as part of the rollout of Community Budgets.

The Government is committed to supporting voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to have a much greater involvement in the running of public services. The voluntary sector plays, and will continue to play, a significant role in reforming services for children, young people and families. The VCS is central to our commitment to building a Big Society and we strongly believe it has a significant role to play in improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children, young people, parents and families in our society.

Responding effectively to Professor Munro's review presents significant opportunities and significant challenges. The Government is committed to continuing to work in partnership to meet those challenges. Over the summer we will be looking to put in place extensive partnership working arrangements. We will draw on existing groups where possible, for example, the Social Work Reform Board and the Implementation Working Group, but in other areas we will need to put in place new arrangements including a multi-disciplinary group of professionals.

Our aim will be to create the conditions for sustained, long term reform which enables and inspires professionals to do their best for vulnerable children and their families. I look forward to continuing to work with you to build a child-centred system.

Yours ever,


TIM LOUGHTON MP