

Department for Education – supplementary written evidence (PSC0062)

Questions from oral evidence session

- In 2017, the Children and Social Work Act replaced the local safeguarding boards and amended Section 10 of the 2004 Act so that a shared and equal duty was placed on all three multiagency partners. The duty to co-operate was placed on the local authority, the chief constable and health—the chief executives of the relevant CCGs, the clinical commissioning groups. You said you would come back to us on whether this compels services to co-operate to intervene early to support children living in families where mental health, addiction or abuse is present.
- Information on the three family hub pilot areas, and when/how the new family hub model will be rolled out nationally

Introduction

This paper responds to questions asked by the House of Lords Public Services Committee during the 14 April evidence session attended by officials from the Department for Education, the Department for Health and Social Care, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

In 2017, the Children and Social Work Act replaced the local safeguarding boards and amended Section 10 of the 2004 Act so that a shared and equal duty was placed on all three multiagency partners. The duty to co-operate was placed on the local authority, the chief constable and health—the chief executives of the relevant CCGs, the clinical commissioning groups. You said you would come back to us on whether this compels services to co-operate to intervene early to support children living in families where mental health, addiction or abuse is present.

[Children Act 1989, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)¹, make provision for the support that should be available to vulnerable children and places a duty on statutory safeguarding partners-police, health and local authorities to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the local area.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 Act does not compel services to co-operate to intervene early to support children living in families where mental health, addiction or abuse is present. This legislation is however supplemented by statutory guidance such as [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#)² which clarifies core legal requirements on

¹ [newbook.book \(socialworkengland.org.uk\)](http://newbook.book.socialworkengland.org.uk)

individuals and organisations to keep children safe.

Chapter 1 explains the importance of early help to prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.

It makes clear that to be effective it relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child.

It also highlights that local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children.

Information on the three family hub pilot areas, and when/how the new family hub model will be rolled out nationally

This Government has committed to championing the family hubs approach and is investing over £14m to support their practical implementation and understand 'what works'. The National Centre for Family Hubs will be run by the Anna Freud Centre and will support local authorities to open family hubs over the next 2 years. Through the Evaluation Innovation Fund, we have commissioned independent evaluation of the impacts and value for money of family hubs across six local authorities in England, and our evaluation partners will be announced shortly. The learning and best practice from these evaluations will be shared with other local authorities to inform local planning to open family hubs. Work with the national centre and evaluation innovation fund commenced in May.

In February, the Department for Education launched an expressions of interest (EOI) round to recruit the first of three local area partners, with the aim of working with them to develop data and digital products to improve how information is shared between different services and the user-experience of families accessing services. We have decided to bring forward the recruitment of the second local area partner to expedite delivery and the identity of both local area partners will be announced shortly. A third local area partner will be recruited over the summer and all three partners will share access to a capacity and transformation grant worth up to £1.2m over the financial years 21-22 and 22-23.

² [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)