The ‘Munro Review’ of Child Protection – Part One: A Systems Analysis

**Legislative Status:**
None. To view the report, go to our website www.trixonline.co.uk, follow links to ‘Policy Briefings’.

**Timescales:**
The first report was published in October 2010. An interim report, which is due in January 2011, will provide a further report on the review’s further progress, beginning to set out potential solutions and areas for possible reform. It will be followed by a final report in April 2011, in which Professor Munro will set out her recommendations.

**Practice areas affected:**
Child protection, including the contribution of the police, health services, education and early years settings, as well as social work practice.

**About this briefing:**
This is a short briefing, summarising the first report.

**What happens next:**
Tri.x will be issuing a further briefing following the second interim report and a full briefing shortly after the final report has been published, and our Lead Consultants will be talking to each of our customers about changes that should be made to their procedures as a result.

Eileen Munro recognises the difficulty and complexity of the social work task and the systems within which it operates. She has started to consider why previous reforms have not had the desired effect. At this stage her findings are analytical and the report does not make any recommendations.

The report takes a systems approach as opposed to looking at specific parts. Previous reviews have left front-line practitioners complying with processes to the exclusion of identifying positive outcomes for children.

There is a focus on the experience of children in that they have many different social workers who do not have time to spend with them. The system appears over bureaucratised and focused on meeting targets.

The report seeks to explain that uncertainty is a key feature in all aspects of child protection work. Identifying cases of abuse or neglect is an uncertain process, since much worrying behaviour goes on at home and certainty and interpretation of the facts can be difficult. A problem for society & professionals is working out a realistic expectation of professionals’ ability to predict the future and manage risk and harm to young people.

The scope of the review covers early intervention – thresholds, early support and universal services - and identifies that change is required if universal services are used to tackle the rise in referrals to Children’s Services.
The review focuses on improving frontline practice. Thought will be given to how professional dependence on prescriptive rules can be replaced by a mixture of 'best professional principles' and 'guided judgement'.

The review also considers how the quality of interaction between social workers and children can be improved and assessed, and how changes to the performance and accountability framework can bring about improvements in practice and public confidence.

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