

KEEPING US SAFE

Executive Summary

**REPORT OF THE SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE
CHILDREN REVIEW**

Our Ref: GT/AA/SVCR

Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister
Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Children

8 February 2006

I am now able to make available to you the report of the Review of Services to Vulnerable Children that you asked me to Chair.

The members of the review team have taken two years to thoroughly investigate the availability, suitability and quality of services for vulnerable children and young people in Wales. I would like to record my thanks to every member for their commitment and hard work.

I would also like to thank Christine Walby OBE for her support and for the high standard of her work.

My thanks also go to the team of officials who have supported the work of the review. My own personal assistant Anne Addison has also made a valuable contribution. A big thank you must be recorded also to all who have participated in the work of the review by making available written evidence or by attending evidence sessions.

My very special thank you goes to the team of young people who have worked in parallel with the review and their report I am sure will be enthusiastically received. NSPCC Cymru deserves our recognition for the way that the young people's group has been assisted.

The review team's report will be challenging for the Welsh Assembly Government but I hope that it will also be a source of inspiration particularly in the field of future policy development.

Finally I would like to record my thanks for having been given the opportunity to chair the review. If our report can be instrumental in improving the standard of life and welfare of our most vulnerable children then our effort will have been worthwhile.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gwenda', written in a cursive style.

GWENDA THOMAS AM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. When, in December 2003 Jane Hutt, the Minister for Health and Social Services and Minister for Children, announced the decision to establish the Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Review, she said that *"safeguarding children has consistently been at the top of our agenda, and over the past four years a number of guidelines and measures have been introduced to secure the protection of children, and the promotion of their welfare."* She explained that the Review would *"...assess progress on the delivery of services on the ground...to see the extent to which services on the front line match up to the policies and guidance we have set out and the investments we have made"*.

2. Members of the Review were individually appointed and acted in an independent capacity. They were drawn from the health, local authority, education, social care, police and voluntary sectors and the legal and academic fields. The chair was an Assembly Member with a special interest in and wide experience of services for children. Officers of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) and an independent adviser to the Chair were available to assist and advise. The Review tried to take a child perspective throughout the process and was helped in this by a member of the Review Team from an organisation for children and young people and an observer from the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales. The Review also commissioned a project designed to involve children and young people across Wales and encourage them to contribute to our work.

3. As the Review was not set up in response to something specific which had gone wrong it was able to take a broad and proactive approach to looking at the real impact upon children of the many positive initiatives taken by WAG over recent years. We did not have the power to require participation but our general invitation for submissions of evidence prompted a wide and well informed response. In addition, specific invitations were issued to individuals and groups to provide evidence and information some of which came through oral sessions or presentations. The Review also examined relevant research and reports from Wales and elsewhere. The focus of the work has consistently been upon what is really happening not upon what policy documents and plans aimed to achieve.

4. It is unfortunately impossible for this report to do full and detailed justice to all the information received. However, the conclusions reached have taken account of all this evidence. We have also taken account of the work in progress following the Waterhouse Report¹, the Carlile Report², the Victoria Climbié Inquiry³ and the Bichard Report⁴ and have tried to avoid covering issues which are currently in hand.

5. The most significant contribution to the Review was that of children. This contribution was mainly focused through the project, facilitated by the NSPCC, which is referred to in paragraph 2 above. As a result of this project the Review received a detailed report⁵ and a presentation from the young people who formed the project steering group. These young people also advised on the title of the Report. In addition to the project the Review also considered other sources of children's views such as surveys of the views of children and other consultation reports.

6. All the sources of the evidence are listed in Appendix 2 and in the Bibliography and a summary of the main messages emerging from that evidence can be found in Part 2 of the Report. The Review Team is very grateful to all who have contributed to the Review and hope

¹ Waterhouse R, 'Lost in Care: Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry Into the Abuse Of Children In Care In the Former County Council Areas Of Gwynedd And Clwyd Since 1974' (2000)

² Lord Carlile of Berriew, 'Too Serious a thing: the review of safeguards for children and young people treated and cared for by the NHS in Wales: (2002)

³ Lord Laming, 'The Victoria Climbié Inquiry' January 2003. Cm 5730 London HMSO

⁴ Sir Michael Bichard, 'The Bichard Inquiry Report on child protection procedures in Humberside Police and Cambridgeshire Constabulary'. HMSO, June 2004

⁵ "Keeping Us Safe Messages From Children and Young People" Safeguarding Review Consultation With Children And Young People June 2005 Final Report

we have accurately reflected what you have told us. There was great consistency in the themes and messages emerging from the evidence. In drawing conclusions the Review has given most weight to those who really know what is actually happening 'on the ground'; that is, the children and young people, the people who work directly with them and the inspectors who inspect and monitor service outcomes. Information from these sources tells us clearly that while much has improved and many good things are happening the stated objectives of government and of local services are not always matched by what is available. The short message from the Review therefore might best be summed up by the Welsh proverb "*Nid da lle gellir gwell*" or "*not good when capable of better*".

Many Positives

7. Many of the positive features identified by the Review are described in Chapter 2 'Building on Good Foundations'. This Chapter contains a summary of many, not all, of the good initiatives throughout Wales at all levels of policy and practice. There is clear evidence of improvement working through the statutory and voluntary services for children. The voluntary organisations, large and small, are making an invaluable contribution often in some very innovative work. In sport and the activities of faith communities we saw examples of growing awareness and positive action to safeguard children. There is also much evidence of the commitment and determination of individual professional and volunteer workers in all fields of work with children and young people. This tapestry of ideals, commitment, excellent initiatives and sheer hard work at all levels which has been revealed to the Review should be celebrated, supported and built upon.

What needs to be done?

8. There is also however evidence of inconsistency in the application of policy and resources, and of inadequate planning and delivery. There is a concerning lack of coherence across children's services which has a detrimental effect upon children and those who work with them. There are concerns about how much short term and uncertain funding undermines confidence and continuity. The balance of investment in services for children also requires attention. It is particularly concerning that morale is not high among some key professional workers such as social workers, paediatricians and teachers.

9. The Review must emphasise that it cannot be reasonably expected that government, professionals or parents can comprehensively protect all children all of the time. There will always be people so powerfully driven by their own need for gratification or so insensitive to the vulnerability of others, particularly children, that they will harm others weaker than themselves. There will continue to be pure accidents or unforeseen consequences which will lead to children being harmed. What can be done however is to improve our capacity to use the best information and expertise available to best effect, and the Review concludes and we trust will demonstrate that this could be done more effectively. We could, the Review believes, better safeguard all children, and more effectively prevent serious harm to the most vulnerable children. Some of the main areas to be addressed are briefly identified in the following paragraphs.

10. There is a need to slow down the rapid rate of change. The key to better safeguards is not necessarily new ideas but a clearer and more sustained focus upon what works, and making sure there is more consistent delivery across Wales. This requires better planning including accurate costing, realistic funding, and improvement in the logistics of implementation. Such a focus is probably best sustained through stable organisations and personnel. Too often in Wales the opposite appears to have been the case. At WAG level the Review believes these issues would best be addressed through a strengthened role for the Minister for Children with a mandate and resources to influence and monitor all services and policies affecting children. This role should be supported by the work of a Children's Scrutiny Committee with powers to examine any issues affecting children. These measures should help to ensure better co-ordinated priorities and targets for children's services and stronger challenge and action when outcomes for children are not good enough. They should also help to ensure that good policies and strategies do not fail or fall short because they are not driven through at every

level and in every area with real understanding and effective planning and monitoring. Many problems identified by the Review flow from these basic issues.

11. Many gaps and inconsistencies within and between systems and services affecting children need to be addressed. Initiatives designed to address similar objectives should be better co-ordinated and based upon similar principles and safeguards. For example projects involving listening to children, helping them to participate in decision making, and those providing advice and representation to individual children and helping them to complain should have a common framework and approach which are child centred rather than service centred. The onus should not be upon the child to know whether their concern, complaint or representation should be addressed to their GP, the Local Health Board or the Community Council or indeed the Local Authority. Similarly, an important concern raised in a School Council but which does not specifically concern the School should be able to be dealt with in a co-ordinated and child centred manner.

12. Better national and local coordination is required so that different service targets and priorities for children are in harmony and that consistency in the level and quality of services for children across Wales is achieved. The inconsistency in funding and service levels should be addressed and particular attention should be given to the significant shortfall in the availability of targeted preventive services and support. Mental health services for children who need them, including children who have been abused, also should be enhanced and more available.

13. The problems briefly mentioned in paragraphs 11 and 12 in particular result in many vulnerable children receiving too little too late and many people who work directly with them feeling frustrated and unsupported. Those particularly vulnerable children who are physically and emotionally abused, including those targeted by organised crime, could be identified and responded to at an earlier stage and could receive much better treatment if the proposals made in this Report are addressed.

14. Other problems arise because the responsibilities for safeguarding children go beyond government and the child protection agencies. There are some basic assumptions which the Review believes are fundamental to safeguarding but which may not be fully accepted within the wider community. These are:

- all adults have a responsibility to be aware of the vulnerability of children and the need to safeguard them
- the role of government is to maintain a framework of good law, policies and strategies, to set priorities and standards, to provide adequate resources, and to hold others to account
- public bodies, public services, professions, independent bodies, voluntary bodies, businesses and the media all have a duty of care towards vulnerable children whatever their other interests
- children are best safeguarded by committed individuals who have the time, training and skills, and the proper support of their employers and their community
- adults should take collective as well as individual responsibility for children and provide love, care, respect and support and appropriate opportunities, experiences and boundaries necessary for learning and development

These assumptions have led the Review to identify action points which recognise that public opinion and attitudes and the role of media can be potent factors which affect safeguarding children.

15. The improvement agenda identified by the Review includes some matters of considerable complexity such as the need to achieve the optimum balance of investment in children. A balance which takes account of:

- the need to have good services for all children;
- the need for the right levels of targeted measures which aim to intervene at an early stage with children seen to be at risk; and
- the need for the right level of residential, secure and remedial measures for children with very serious problems.

Successive UK governments have not addressed this issue effectively. It is very difficult and requires a long term perspective and commitment. One which goes beyond the average lifetime of any government. The present pattern of service provision is a product, since the earliest social legislation, of responses to perceived problems at different times. The resulting pattern of responsibilities and funding streams for children's services make it almost impossible, as this Report shows, clearly to identify all expenditure on vulnerable children. What is needed therefore is a child focused analysis of what services are right for our children and a coordinated approach to public investment in children which aims to achieve best value measured in terms of cost and outcomes for children. The Review suggests possible ways forward.

16. Therefore elected representatives at all levels of government need to try to reach a more substantive and committed long term political consensus for children's services. Such a consensus could give children's services much needed structural stability and financial sustainability and make them less vulnerable to destabilising rapid change. History has shown that uncertainty and lack of continuity in services can be very dangerous for vulnerable children. The Review suggests therefore that the needs and interests of vulnerable children demand and deserve longer term goals and slower change programmes than sometimes is the case.

The Challenge

17. The overall analysis of the evidence has identified important issues, both large and small, where the Review recommends that action should be taken. These are summarised at the end of this Executive Summary and discussed in detail in Part 1 Chapter 2 of this Report, 'The Challenge and the Agenda for Action'. Arising from the premise that safeguarding our children is 'everybody's business' the actions recommended by the Review cover statutory and voluntary services for children and other activity which is seen to have an important influence upon safeguarding.

These challenges are:

Challenge 1: THE CHILDREN - to build upon initiatives to place them at the centre of policy and service development which affect them and to improve, expand and rationalise arrangements for listening to them and advocating on their behalf

Challenge 2: THE PUBLIC - to address the apparently confused and conflicting attitudes to children in our society

Challenge 3: THE WORKFORCE - to improve the levels, stability, confidence, competency, support and job satisfaction of people who work with children

Challenge 4: THE FORMAL SYSTEMS - to make them more child friendly, better and more consistently resourced and fit for purpose

Challenge 5: THE VISION AND STRATEGY - to develop and implement a secure long term integrated vision and strategy for consistent services for vulnerable children

Challenge 6: THE FINANCE - to review, evaluate and rationalise the balance of investment in services for children and to consolidate and stabilise funding streams

Challenge 7: THE NEW RISKS - to develop a more effective capacity for identifying and responding to emerging risks to vulnerable children

These challenges are based upon the Review's analysis of the issues which we believe lie at the heart of the problems we have identified.

Current Developments

18. During the lifetime of the Review there have been developments upon which we cannot comment because our focus has been upon outcomes rather than intent. Of the work currently in progress however the most significant for the safeguarding of children is the introduction of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) by October 2006 and the final implementation of the measures recommended by the Bichard Report including the establishment of lists of those barred from working with children and vulnerable adults. With regard to the latter it should be recognised that despite recent highly publicised problems in the Education Service the formal systems and checks designed to protect children are safer now than they have ever been throughout our history.

19. The efficacy of future safeguarding practice will hinge very much upon the success of LSCBs. Their new statutory status and broader remit should help them to exert a greater influence than Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) could achieve with their limited resources and status. There are however important issues to be resolved if LSCBs are to succeed. These include the need for clarity about local strategic relationships; the need for an agreed definition of the activities and responsibilities included in safeguarding; and the need to ensure that LSCBs have the membership and resources necessary for carrying out their responsibilities. History has shown that few, if any, ACPCs enjoyed appropriate commitment and resources from member agencies. Crucially LSCBs must be able to monitor the performance and hold to account all agencies with responsibilities for safeguarding children and must receive full co-operation in this task. At the time of writing there are some expressed doubts and concerns about these issues and the Review would urge WAG to maintain a close watch to ensure that LSCBs are equipped and enabled to achieve their intended performance levels.

20. Finally, the Review recognises the enormity of the task encompassed in our Terms of Reference and pays tribute to WAG for starting a process which could have long term implications. The time and resource available has not been sufficient to enable us to undertake a highly detailed level of analysis on all the issues which require attention. What we have endeavoured to do however, within the framework of the Challenges, is to identify key areas and a comprehensive framework for action which can be developed further. The Review members would be pleased to assist in the process of addressing the Challenges and would also be prepared, if considered appropriate, to be reconvened after a period of time to assist in reviewing progress on the issues raised by this Report.

THE CHALLENGES

These action points are discussed and elucidated more fully in Chapter 3

CHALLENGE 1: The Children - to build upon initiatives to place children at the centre of policy and service development and to improve, expand and rationalise arrangements for listening to and advocating for all children the following is required:-

1. WAG to have a programme for raising the universal services (health and education) for all children to the standards and quality of the best and to eradicate disparities in services across Wales:

- the basic training of professionals in the universal services should include training in the early recognition of vulnerable children and how to make appropriate referral to specialist agencies
- the voluntary youth sector and faith, culture and arts organisations for children and young people should have procedures for checking all adult helpers to ensure that they are not a danger to children and are trained to recognise vulnerable children and make appropriate referral to specialist agencies

2. WAG to develop a common framework for all arrangements for children's participation in policy and service development and other major decisions which affect them. It should include:

- all activities which facilitate consultation and expression of children's views (such as school councils, consultation forums, questionnaires, children's champions, participation work)
- consideration of developing school councils as a channel for both school and community issues and encouragement of school governors to have regular discussion with school councils
- a co-ordinated approach to establishing principles and standards, methods of monitoring effectiveness and promoting best practice

3. WAG to develop a common framework for all statutory arrangements for providing independent advice to and representation of the interests of individual children (ie Advocates, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), Complaints Officers, and Personal Advisers). Its component parts should be:

- a system of children's complaints and advocacy across all public services including GP and other independent contractor services
- independent 'one stop shops' in all areas for dealing with children's individual complaints and concerns across all public services
- a common set of principles and standards for independent advocacy
- a set of principles and standards for independent advocacy which will ensure a) prevention of conflict between service provider interests and children's interests in the event of a complaint or challenge, and b) consistent procedures for the resolution of issues raised with service providers on behalf of a child

- independent monitoring of the quality of advice and representation services and appropriate regulation of individuals working in this field

4. WAG to establish a central unit to lead, co-ordinate, support and monitor the activities described in (2) and (3) above. It should:

- be resourced with the strategic, operational, professional and managerial skills necessary to do the job
- account to and support the Minister for Children as this role is consistent with an unequivocal focus upon advocating for children's rights and representation rather than upon a particular service
- advise upon, develop and monitor the systems and structures needed to ensure a skilled, safe and independent advice and representation service for children throughout the public services in Wales
- establish and monitor the standards of such a service and advise upon and approve the independence and quality of commissioning arrangements for these services

5. WAG to consider restoring the formal link between WAG and the Children's Commissioner through the Minister for Children for the reasons given in 4c above.

6. Local Authorities to develop regional commissioning arrangements for advocacy services to include:

- a regional steering group, including providers of services, with a remit to advise on problems and improvement, identification of emerging issues raised by children, and training and regulation of staff and volunteers

7. WAG to ensure that common standards are introduced for independent advocacy:

- to include standards for the selection, training and monitoring of volunteers (the model developed for CAB voluntary advisers may be a useful example)
- non social workers with other professional qualifications should be able to demonstrate an identifiable core of required skills and knowledge for advocacy
- the Care Council for Wales and similar bodies to review their position to ensure that consideration is given to the issue of registration and professional discipline for all individuals undertaking the role of advocate, supporter, adviser to or representative of vulnerable children

CHALLENGE 2: THE PUBLIC - to address the confused and conflicting attitudes to children in our society the following is required:-

1. WAG to develop a public information strategy designed to promote a better informed public image of children with the objectives of:

- raising greater awareness of the needs of children, promoting more sympathetic understanding of how issues affect children and greater acceptance of adult responsibilities towards all children including the shared responsibility to develop safe communities
- promoting more understanding that children who are "sinned against" or "sinning" are at different points on the same continuum

- promoting support for further improvement in the quality, sustainability and equality of standards of universal services for children across Wales
- promoting among all public services, independent providers and the business community a better understanding and acceptance of their wider responsibilities for safeguarding children
- ensuring that all local authority community strategies include strategies for safeguarding children and involving them positively in their communities

2. WAG to promote a strategy for engaging the media in reflecting upon the impact upon children in general and vulnerable children in particular of ways in which issues involving children are handled:

- to consider a joint initiative between government and the Children's Commissioner to engage the media in the public information strategy outlined above
- to promote the strengthening of training programmes for journalists in the understanding of the best interests of children and child protection
- to encourage the media to take account of the child's best interests when covering news stories

CHALLENGE 3: THE WORKFORCE - to improve the levels, stability, confidence, competency, support and job satisfaction of people who work with children the following is required:-

1. WAG and employers to action the recommendations in the report "Social Work in Wales: A Profession to Value"⁶ as a matter of urgency.

2. WAG to give urgent consideration to the introduction of legal protection for professional staff who make child protection referrals or give expert opinion in good faith (with particular reference to consultant paediatricians).

3. The Police, Crown Prosecution Service and public service managers to effect further improvement in developing a more integrated approach to the conduct of investigations of allegations against staff with a view to:

- a quicker and less stressful process for children and staff
- prevention of repetition of evidence gathering, and
- more rapid release of relevant evidence to be made available for the disciplinary process

4. WAG to implement recommendation 21.7 of the Report of the Children's Commissioner for Wales that guidance should be issued on how allegations of child abuse made against teaching and non teaching staff should be investigated.

5. Unions and Employers to review their policies and practices with regard to the support given to "whistleblowers". Specifically:

- where it is not the policy of a Union to provide dedicated support to a member who is a whistleblower the employer should designate a senior member of staff not involved in the investigation to carry out this role

⁶ Social Work in Wales: A Profession to Value. The report of the ADSS led multi agency group on the recruitment and retention of Social Workers in Wales August 2005

6. Relevant Unions and sections of the media to reconsider the content and tone of some public statements made when prosecutions of staff fail or decisions are taken not to proceed with criminal prosecution:

- to appreciate that these circumstances cannot be construed as proof that a false allegation was made

7. Where staff are alleged to have assaulted a child employers to have in place procedures to ensure immediate decision and action, including the release of relevant papers, about the need for disciplinary proceedings should there be no prosecution or a failed prosecution:

- this should involve taking advice from officers with the necessary expertise in child protection

8. Higher Education providers to ensure that the training of staff working in universal services such as education and health has a compulsory component about safeguarding children including the ways in which child abusers operate and when to make appropriate referrals.

9. Employers to ensure that the role of giving advice and support in investigations and disciplinary proceedings involving child abuse should be restricted to specialist Human Resources with access to expert advice and a programme of training in safeguarding children and child protection.

CHALLENGE 4: THE FORMAL SYSTEMS - to make them more child friendly, better and more consistently resourced and fit for purpose the following is required:-

1. WAG to consider stronger measures to promote collaborative and partnership working in the event that present measures do not deliver what is required in timescales relevant to the present generation of children.

2. WAG to evaluate the concept and application of 'emotional intelligence' and assess its' potential contribution to policy and practice affecting children in Wales.

3. SSIW, Estyn, HIW and HM Inspector of Constabularies to develop existing collaboration further and to move towards integrated systems for Inspections of joined up services:

- to prioritise the development of integrated Inspection protocols for scrutiny of LSCBs and their capacity to carry out the required functions

4. WAG to ensure that anti bullying strategies are part of the Single Education Plan and the Children Services Plan. WAG should also consider making a legal requirement of employers of young people to have similar anti bullying measures in place and to exercise a duty of care.

5. WAG to ensure that information and data protection systems in agencies are enhanced to facilitate improved information sharing between agencies and checking of staff. This should include:

- requesting the Information Commissioner to issue clearer guidance and be more proactive in relation to vulnerable children
- ensuring that CRB checks are conducted on all school governors and that formal checks are routinely made on the non criminal exclusions for consideration as a Governor (eg bankruptcy and detention under the Mental Health legislation)

- clarifying standards for making recruitment checks and instituting a new standard that CRB checks should be carried out every 3 years in all statutory agencies, pending final proposals from the Bichard working groups

6. WAG to provide guidance to Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships on the development of a comprehensive programme of preventive and supportive measures for vulnerable children and their parents. This should include:

- developing parenting classes in schools and tier 1 support under the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy for vulnerable children and parents and specialist nurture group support in school settings for young children with serious emotional and behavioural difficulties
- developing local family assessment facilities for Welsh families who need, or may be required by a Court to undergo such assessment. Currently families are sent to facilities in England, usually far from their home community

7. The Education service to provide targeted funding for a strategy to include support tutors, catch up classes and mentors for 'looked after children' in the mainstream school system.

8. The Education Service to support the development of emotionally intelligent schools:

- as part of a national agenda on child and adolescent mental health and to include in the curriculum the development of emotional resilience and emotional intelligence in children

9. Higher Education providers to include compulsory modules within initial teacher training on child protection and:

- to make specific funding available for raising awareness and skills among serving teachers and for initial teacher training
- LEAs to review and revise governor training and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding

10. The NHS in Wales to give more prominence to children in management targets and:

- introduce independent advocacy and complaints procedures for children in the health service
- produce legal guidance on the Venereal Diseases regulations in respect of sharing information on vulnerable children
- take further steps to review and strengthen children's mental health services

11. The Police Service in Wales to develop a more consistent approach to child safeguarding issues in the context of dealing with domestic violence and anti social behaviour.

12. The Sports Council for Wales to review its present policy regarding child protection and make grant funding to sports organisations conditional upon child protection procedures and routine CRB checks being in place.

13. Members of LSCBs to ensure nomination of the appropriate level of representation and the allocation of sufficient resources to enable the Local Safeguarding Children Boards to carry out their required functions.

14. WAG to scrutinise the effectiveness of LSCBs and hold participating departments to account.

CHALLENGE 5: THE VISION and STRATEGY - to develop and implement a secure long term vision and strategy for vulnerable children the following is required:-

1. WAG to establish a long term national strategic plan for children's services which should as far as possible have political consensus and commitment. It should:

- be founded upon research and other evidence, based upon an agreed philosophy, and framed by a conceptual model which can be used nationally and locally
- determine the desired balance of public investment in services for children between universal services, targeted preventive services for children at risk and remedial services for children with serious problems

2. WAG to set up a cross cutting children's Scrutiny Committee with a remit and powers to scrutinise all children's services from a child centred perspective.

3. WAG to review arrangements for the co-ordination of Ministerial and Civil Servant responsibilities for children with a view to achieving greater co-ordination and harmonisation of planning and operations.

4. WAG to support the initiative to establish a cross party group on children with a view to informing the thinking of all political parties.

(Note: the Westminster model which has existed for several years is a cross party group on children with external servicing arrangements. It holds discussions and receives briefings on a range of issues affecting children).

5. WAG to consider a funded national strategy to address the commercial exploitation of children.

6. WAG to employ a limited use of short-term funding to time limited projects and properly evaluated experiments.

CHALLENGE 6: THE FINANCE - to review the balance of investment in children's services and to consolidate funding streams the following is required:-

1. WAG to commission a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the expenditure and cost benefits of investment in children's services including health, education, social care, police, courts and legal services, and young offender services.

2. WAG to commission an exercise to gather all available information regarding unit costings of different interventions and use to inform financial assessment of policy decisions in services for children.

3. WAG to review whether core funding of services is based upon realistic assessment and placed upon a sustainable basis.

4. WAG to develop a strategic financial plan for all services for children in Wales to underpin the plans developed under Challenge 5 above:

- to facilitate working towards planned objectives to change the balance of funding between universal services, skilled intensive early interventions with children at risk and remedial interventions for children with serious problems

5. Local Authorities and the WLGA to work towards the early development of a strong expert commissioning capacity for children's services which can manage the market and obtain better value for money and quality of service from the independent sector, taking account of:

- the need to attract and retain appropriate expertise within the local authorities
- the need to have regard to the importance of continuity and quality in safeguarding children
- the need to retain expert small specialist providers within the competitive arena
- the need to invest in research to inform the quality of commissioning
- the need to take account of the development and infrastructure costs of independent providers of the specialist services needed by children with complex needs
- the need to develop a whole child approach to commissioning services and to commission jointly with partner agencies

CHALLENGE 7: THE NEW RISKS – to develop a more effective capacity for identifying and responding to emerging risks to vulnerable children the following is required:-

1. WAG to establish a multi disciplinary 'new risks new opportunities' standing group of individuals with special expertise and commitment:

- to identify new trends and problems which present new threats to the safeguarding of children and to recommend action
- to monitor worldwide developments in safeguarding children and identify those which would have a valuable application to Wales
- to report regularly to the Minister for Children

2. WAG to establish a Task and Finish group to examine the extent of criminal exploitation of children and the responses by different police authorities and local authorities.

3. WAG to take urgent action to respond more comprehensively to the existing threat posed by the Internet and new technology and specifically to:

- issue new regulations (perhaps under Section 175 Education Act 2002) to ensure a safe and secure infrastructure which includes all computers in all schools (including those used by teachers only), youth clubs and libraries
- require all schools to use only assured provider
- require LEAs to develop E-safety policies covering the range of risks identified in this Report and individual Governing Bodies to have E-safety policies
- require Local Authorities to ensure that similar policies are in place to protect looked after children, whether they live in families or residential care, or are in receipt of services commissioned from another body
- work in conjunction with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) to ensure that Internet literacy programmes, critical thinking skills,

management of online and mobile phone risks and personal safety online are embedded in the Wales National Curriculum

- ensure that E-safety is included in local child protection procedures and is promoted and monitored by LSCBs, Community Safety and Public Safety policies

4. WAG to make more use of available initiatives and:

- adopt Home Office initiatives on Internet Safety and issue them in Wales as soon as possible
- adopt the DfES resource packs dealing with online grooming, online bullying and bullying via mobile phones (cost £4) and issuing in Wales as a matter of urgency
- ensure that Wales has a direct and active involvement with the new National Internet Safety Centre

5. WAG to seek assurance that procedures for gathering, using and storing video evidence for court purposes will be reviewed to ensure that the material is not used inappropriately or abusively and that consistent standards of practice are applied.