

## **Belfast City Council**

### **Representation on External Child Protection Forums**

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Council Representative: Blanche Thompson, Play Development Officer,  
[BCC Child Protection Officer]

#### **Eastern Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC)**

There are currently 4 ACPCs in Northern Ireland; each covering a Health & Social Services Board area. The aim is

through multi-disciplinary and inter-agency co-operation, to promote the welfare of children and to protect them from abuse and neglect

In line with the new RPA arrangements, the 4 ACPCs are to be replaced in autumn 2009 by a single statutory Board; the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland. The SBNI will help to ensure that there is a comprehensive, co-ordinated and consistent approach to safeguarding practice in and between the key organisations within Northern Ireland. There will be 3 places allocated to District Councils. It is unclear at this stage as to how nominations will be sought. The ACPCs will therefore continue until the SBNI is fully implemented and Blanche will continue to represent BCC on the Eastern area committee and advise of the new arrangements re local government representation as soon as these are known.

#### **Belfast Trust Child Protection Panel**

Under the previous Health & Social Services Trust, there were panels to represent local issues and to discuss standards in regard to child protection. Within Belfast there was a panel for both the North & West and the South & East Trusts. Under the proposed new structure under SBNI, new panels will be established to replace the previous ones and to feed into the SBNI.

As an interim measure until the SBNI is established, the new Belfast Trust has established a city-wide panel comprised of representatives from the main statutory and voluntary sector. Blanche represents BCC on this interim panel.

#### **Co-ordination Forum**

This best practice forum meets twice a year and is co-ordinated through the Volunteer Development Agency (which incorporates Our Duty to Care<sup>1</sup>). The forum is comprised of representatives from the statutory, community and voluntary sector from across NI. Information is shared regarding ongoing issues, training, good practice and legislation. Blanche attends the forum as a local government representative in order to provide a District Council perspective.

#### **Local Government Child Protection Network**

This is comprised of representatives from the 26 District Councils who are responsible for child protection within their respective Council. The Local

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<sup>1</sup> The Volunteer Development Agency provides information and training on all issues of child protection through the Our Duty to Care project, which is supported by the Child Care Unit (Department of Health & Social Services & Public Safety)

Government Staff Commission has representation and provides support. It is a forum where issues of common concerns are discussed and good practice and information is shared. The aim is to create a consistency across the Councils. From this four of the Councils (Belfast, Ards, Castlereagh and Lisburn) who have child protection trainers have developed a common training programme that is not only delivered within our own Councils, but also to other Councils through the Local Government Staff Commission. Blanche is co-ordinator for the network.

### **Belfast Keeping Safe Project Steering Group**

This project is run through the Health & Social Services Trust and developed through Our Duty to Care (VDA). The project runs in several Trust areas throughout NI and the focus is on the development and delivery of accredited child protection training. The training is cascaded through trainers from the voluntary and statutory sector primarily to the community sector. BCC Community Services has 5 trainers (Play Development Officer, 3 Community Development Workers and a Playworker) who deliver training to the community sector. Three of the trainers (2 CDWs and PDO) also deliver the child protection training internally.

The Steering Group oversees the standards for the training, how the training is delivered and feeds into reviews of the training. Through involvement in the above, the PDO was involved in a review group for 'Our Duty to Care' which provides guidance for voluntary and community groups on safeguarding children from harm and to promote good practice.

### **Future Development**

With the merging of the Boards into one regional structure, there will be the establishment of a single statutory Board – SBNI (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland) in autumn 2009. The aim will be to ensure that there is a comprehensive, co-ordinated and consistent approach to safeguarding practice in and between the key organisations within Northern Ireland. There will be 3 places allocated to District Councils.