

## **Data Protection Officer Conference in 2010**

### **Improving information sharing and management presentation**

#### **Christine Goodfellow, Director of the Improving Information Sharing and Management Programme (IISaM) at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)**

Christine began by outlining the issues DCSF are hoping to address, referring to "Every Child Matters", the report that resulted from the tragic death of Victoria Climbié. The report identified 5 positive outcomes that should be achieved for all children. In order to achieve those aims, practitioners need to work together, intervene earlier, and have the tools to enable this.

She outlined five DCSF projects aiming to help this process and gave further detail in respect of three of them: information sharing, ContactPoint and National eCAF.

#### **Information sharing**

Christine emphasised the importance of inter-agency information sharing with reference to Lord Laming's report in the case of Baby P. Almost all serious case reviews conclude that the child has been "let down" by a failure to share information. The DCSF has, therefore, produced information sharing guidance with Barnardos that has been endorsed by a wide range of organisations.

#### **ContactPoint**

ContactPoint is also endorsed by 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners. It is a tool to enable child practitioners to contact other agencies involved in providing services to that child. She emphasised that this was not an "invest to save" initiative but rather "invest to reinvest", i.e. any time saved is to be ploughed back into working with children.

The information held on the database is regulated. As well as basic demographic information and universal service providers (such as G.P. and school) it will detail whether the child has any contact with e.g. a social worker or special educational needs co-ordinator. The database will record whether the child receives services related to

mental or sexual health, or drug or substance abuse only with the consent of the child or responsible adult. In all cases, the details of the services are not recorded, merely the contact details of the relevant practitioner. It is for the practitioners themselves to determine whether, or how much information to share.

The database is populated with information from numerous sources such as Connecting for Health, the schools census, general records office and accredited local data sources. Data is matched to create the "best view" but it is possible to identify the source of each piece of data.

Security is paramount and it is important that it is regarded as everyone's problem. Education and training is needed so that everyone understands the importance of the information they have and how to protect it. There is a layered approach to security e.g. users identities are verified, transfers are encrypted, all access is traceable and audited and it is not possible to download information.

National rollout is now in progress after a successful trial with 17 authorities in the North West.

### **National e-CAF**

This is an online Common Assessment Form which does contain the case data and is intended to speed up service provision. This is also being trialled prior to national roll out in 2011.

Christine praised her contact with the ICO. Although (as David Smith confirmed in his introduction) the ICO does have some concerns regarding the proportionality aspects of ContactPoint. She found the ICO to be helpful, constructive and professional and she encouraged anyone considering a project with data protection issues to engage with us as this is a valuable investment of time.

She also found the recent data losses to be useful both as a wake up call to all those involved with processing personal data and as an encouragement to others to feel able to confess their own losses

She concluded by quoting from a recent DCSF security review that found that security is ingrained in everything they do. However, it was important never to become complacent.

## Questions

1. Are there recognised standards the DCSF looks for when accrediting an organisation to contribute to ContactPoint?

The organisation must demonstrate due procedures such as audit trails, HR policies, proper training, and disciplinary procedures. For an organisation proposing to supply local data, the DCSF provides them with a local data quality tool to help them clean up their data before feeding in to the database. Basically it must demonstrate data quality standards.

2. Do you have data destruction arrangements when the child ceases to be a child?

The record exists from birth to the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. On that birthday the record is archived for 6 years. There is provision to keep the record open until the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday but only with the data subject's explicit consent. This might apply where the subject had mental health problems or had been in care and, therefore, he continued to receive services after the age of 18.