



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

**Children  
in Northern  
Ireland**



## Changes to make the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

# WORK BETTER





## What is it all about?

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) was set up nearly ten years ago. The main job of the Safeguarding Board is to help keep children and young people here safe from harm.

It is made up of lots of different agencies like the Police Service for Northern Ireland, Social services, Education, Justice, local Councils, and voluntary organisations.

The Department of Health makes sure that the Safeguarding Board works well. We asked an expert to look closely at the work of the Safeguarding Board. She came up with ideas to improve it. We have accepted her advice.

We now want to make the changes she suggested, but that means that we will have to change some of the laws that set out how the Safeguarding Board works.

Before we change the laws we want to make sure that everyone understands what this means.

So, we want to know what **YOU** think.

Here are the **5** changes we are planning to make.....



2

1

## The problem...

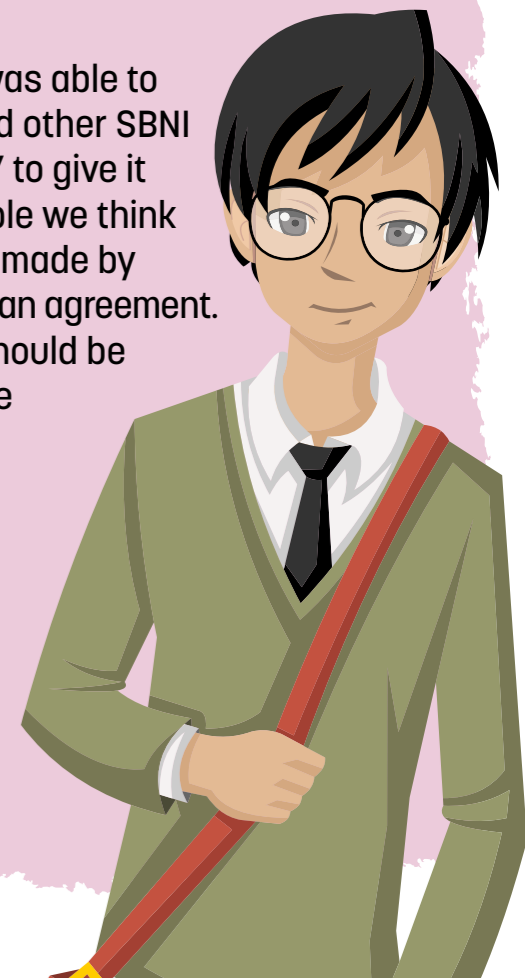
The rules for how the Safeguarding Board runs its meetings and other proceedings are set down in laws. This is not very flexible and means that, for example, two thirds of members have to be in the room before meetings can start. Because this was set out in law there was no flexibility and often meetings would have to be delayed until enough members came along.



## The change...

It would be easier if the Safeguarding Board was able to write down how it is going to run meetings and other SBNI business in what are called "Standing Orders" to give it more flexibility than at the moment. For example we think it would be better if important decisions were made by everyone talking things through and coming to an agreement. We think that the reasons behind decisions should be written down, along with any arguments made against the decision.

Do you agree? Why/why not?



# 2

## The problem...

The rules for meetings of the Safeguarding Board said that members would vote on whether or not they agreed with a decision. If most people at the meeting agreed - then the decision was made.

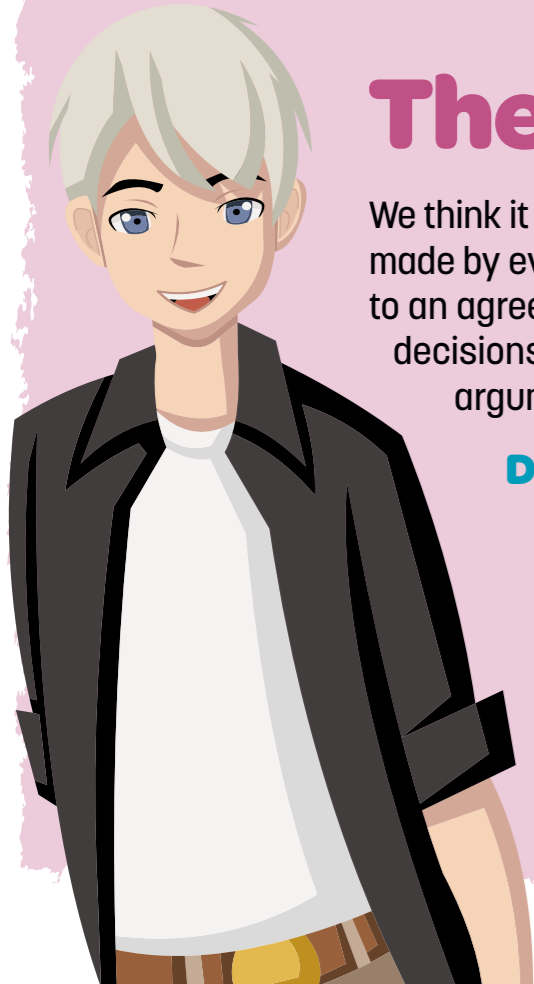
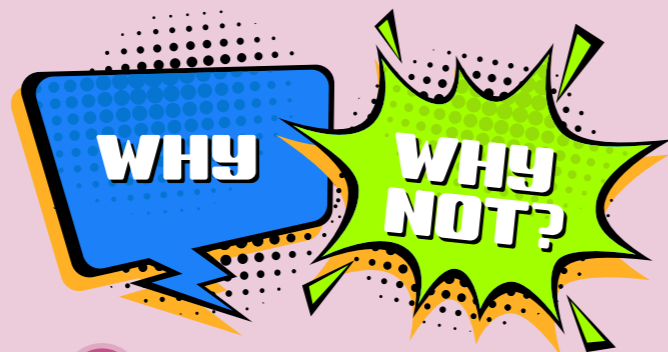
A simple majority vote may not be the best way to make decisions about important things like children being harmed or even killed.



## The change...

We think it would be better if important decisions were made by everyone talking things through and coming to an agreement. We think that the reasons behind decisions should be written down, along with any arguments made against the decision.

**Do you agree? Why/why not?**



# 3

## The problem...

When a child has died or come to very serious harm the Safeguarding Board may look into the case if abuse or neglect is suspected - particularly to learn if things might have been done better. This is called a Case Management Review.

These were generally working well but sometimes it wasn't clear which cases should be looked at. Sometimes the Safeguarding Board was not told about serious cases and sometimes they were told about cases that were not relevant.

It wasn't always clear who was in charge of making the decision to look at a case.

## The change...

We think that the chair of the Safeguarding Board should be the one to decide whether a case should be looked at or not. When they decide not to look into a case, they should tell the rest of the Board why they have made that decision.

We also think there needs to be an agreement about what serious harm is - for example harm that is life threatening or likely to have a long term effect on the child as they grow up.

As the learning from looking into cases is so important we think that the people in charge of Case Management Reviews should be in charge of making sure that everyone hears about the lessons learned.

**Do you agree? Why/why not?**



# 4

## The problem...

Laws set out what staff the Safeguarding Board has and what they do in their jobs. The law also sets out that the Public Health Agency is in charge of making sure the Safeguarding Board has office space and admin support and cleaning services.

These laws don't allow the Safeguarding Board to have flexibility around what staff they need or where they need to be.



## The change...

We don't think that rules about staff and offices need to be written into the law.

We think the Safeguarding Board, the Public Health Agency and the Department of Health should talk together to come up with an agreement about what staff and office space is needed. This would allow more flexibility for things to be changed easily in the future, if needed.

**Do you agree? Why/why not?**



# 5

## The problem...

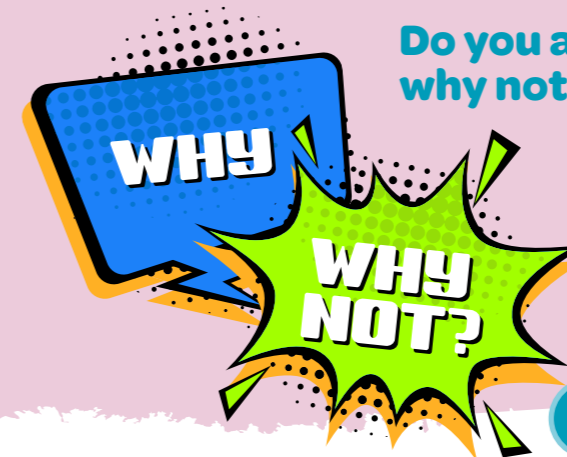
When the Safeguarding Board was set up nearly 10 years ago there were 26 Councils in Northern Ireland. Because there were so many, it was felt that Councils should have 2 representatives on the Safeguarding Board.

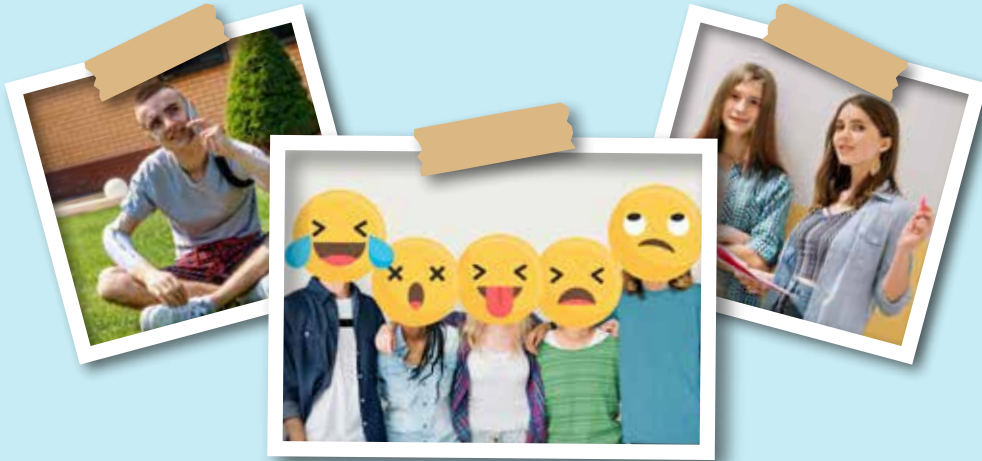
There are now only 11 Council areas in Northern Ireland. Therefore there are fewer Council Chief Executives available to sit on the Safeguarding Board.

## The change...

We think that only 1 council Chief Executive needs to sit on the Safeguarding Board. We also think the rules for local panels should be changed to show that there are now only 11 local Councils.

**Do you agree? Why/why not?**





## Please let us know what you think of these changes!

You can send your views before 11th November 2021 to:

Family and Children's Policy Directorate Child Protection Unit -  
SBNI Consultation Department of Health

**Room A3.5A,  
Castle Buildings  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SQ**

Or By email to:  
[fcpdadmin@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:fcpdadmin@health-ni.gov.uk)

**Thank you for your help!**

