**Pointers for Practice: Preparing Reports for Conference**

An effective assessment depends on a holistic understanding of the family’s circumstances, areas of concern and family strengths from a range of professional perspectives. When preparing a report for the initial child protection conference practitioners contributing to the conference should consider:

1) Child-focused assessments take place when practitioners not only describe child and carer behaviours and family circumstances but also consider the impact of these on the health and development of each child in the family. For example, if there are concerns about domestic violence, what has the child and carer described? What are practitioners observing from the child’s behaviour?

2) Do not provide a list of dates of agency contacts without give some indication as to the nature of the contact and the outcome. Think why are these dates and actions relevant?

3) When deciding what to include in the assessment ask yourself if this relevant? Is the information increasing our understanding of the child, the family and their situation? If in doubt discuss with the social worker.

4) Practitioners are contributing a report because they not only have contact with the child and family, they also have a professional background that enables them to make judgements about the concerns and family strengths, from their professional perspective. Do not be afraid to draw on this. The professional opinion of everyone is valued.

5) The assessment framework enables you to consider the various dimensions of child and developmental needs, parenting capacity and family and environmental factors. When considering the impact of abuse and neglect on a child try and draw on these dimensions to demonstrate how the health and well-being of the child is being affected. Also, consider how parenting issues are impacting on the various dimensions of parenting capacity.

6) Be sure to support your analysis, with evidence from what you have observed, have been told by the family, the accounts of the daily lived experience of the family or research.

7) Capturing the daily lived experience provides practitioners with insights as to how culture, religion, disability and parenting issues are impacting on each family member. Draw on this to avoid making generalised statements about parenting issues, culture and diversity.