

Children's Social Care Reform Briefing Slides May 2023

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Overview

- Government response to three reviews – Care Review; National Safeguarding Panel Review; and Competition & Markets Authority Review
- Two top headlines:
 - Shift from crisis intervention to earlier Family Help
 - Strengthening of Multi-Agency response
- Described as “once in a generation opportunity to reset Children’s Social Care”, but...
 - Financial investment not there
 - 2 years of piloting – “to lay the ground for long-term future reform”
 - No primary legislation this side of next election
- Formal consultation up to May – government response to that in September

(Pillar 1) Family Help

Focus upon delivering the right help at the right time; a Multi-Disciplinary approach; engaging wider family networks at the earliest opportunity

Next two years:

- Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme – single intensive Multi-Disciplinary service led by Local Authority – 12 Pathfinders
- Family Help Workers – knowledge and skills
- Joined up funding and inspection frameworks
- Working for everyone - review legislation for disabled children; change re addressing ethnic disparities and material deprivation

(Pillar 2) Child Protection System

Focus upon delivering a more integrated multi-agency system, led by Social Workers with the highest knowledge and skills.

Next two years:

- Families First for Children Pathfinders – Multi-Agency service part of the same service as Family Help, co-working with families; new lead CP SW role
- Revision of Working Together: new Multi-Agency Child Protection Standards
- Stronger Multi-Agency Leadership – including exploring and consulting on the role of Education; local strategic and operational groups
- Tackling court delays and parental engagement in the family courts.

(Pillar 3) Family Networks

Focus upon doing more to bring wider friends and family members into decision-making for children, from the earliest stages of working with families through to providing a loving stable home for children; to create a culture of “family first”.

Next two years:

- Pathfinders – the 12 Families First for Children to test family group decision-making, plus 7 pilots to test new Family Network Support Packages
- National Kinship Care Strategy by end of 2023
- Training and support offer – for all kinship carers

(Pillar 4) Children in Care

Focus on the care system providing stable, loving homes close to children's communities; revised approach to commissioning; more ambition for children in care and care leavers.

Next Two Years:

- Fostering recruitment and retention programme – test of regional model
- Leadership programme for children's homes
- Financial oversight regime for the big private providers
- Two Pathfinders for Regional Care Co-operatives
- Corporate parenting ambitions: family finding, befriending and mentoring; corporate parenting across public sector; apprenticeships; Care Leaver Covenant; mental and physical health of care leavers

(Pillar 5) Social Work Workforce

Focus on Social Workers having the tools and time to do their job; an excellent SW for every child that needs one; to prioritise training and wellbeing.

Next two years:

- SW Early Career Framework
- Improved retention – working conditions and workload pressures
- Reduce cost and reliance on locum SWs
- Boost SW recruitment – including through apprenticeship route

(Pillar 6) System Enablers

Focus upon clearer national direction and a system that is continually learning and improving.

Next Two Years:

- National Framework for Children's Social Care- outcomes and practice guides
- Data Strategy by end of 2023
- Aligned inspection – Ofsted to align with the national framework
- Enhanced intervention – focus upon Requires Improvement LA's
- New formula for funding to LA's for children and families

Next Steps

- Tower Hamlets preparation to bid for pathfinder status and engagement in the London Programme; testing what we can do now; ensuring we learn from others
- London Care Reform Programme for next two years to match the period of piloting – James Thomas leading for London
- Joint Programme for Association of London Directors of Children’s Services and the London Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Key points for co-ordination
 - Responses to consultation and engagement with government
 - Maximum involvement in formal pathfinders
 - Co-ordination of learning from across London and elsewhere
 - Building Multi-Agency consensus on what works and what is needed