



## Children's Social Care - National Implementation Board (Interim meeting)

Minutes of meeting held on 21 July 2022, 09:00-10:30.

Minister's Boardroom, and virtually via MS Teams.

NOTE – This Board was classed as an 'interim' meeting, as the process for appointing permanent board members with experience of the social care system (Experts by Experience) had not yet concluded. Three individuals, who sat on the Experts by Experience Group for the Independent Review into Children's Social Care, were invited to attend, to ensure those with personal experience of the care system were present in the discussions while the process for appointing permanent members was ongoing.

### Attendees

- Brendan Clarke-Smith MP - Minister for Children and Families. **Chair.**
- Amanda Spielman - His Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted
- Angela Frazer-Wicks - Interim Experts by Experience member
- Sir Anthony Finkelstein CBE, FREng - President of City, University of London.  
Computer Scientist
- David Akinsanya - Interim Experts by Experience member
- Isabelle Trowler - Chief Social Worker for Children and Families for England
- Janet Kay - Interim Experts by Experience member
- Jill Colbert OBE - Chief Executive of Together for Children and Director for Children's Services in Sunderland
- Dame Rachel De Souza DBE - England's Children's Commissioner
- Steve Crocker OBE - President of the Association for Directors of Children's Services
- Tom Riordan CBE - Chief Executive of Leeds City Council

### Officials in Attendance

- Josh MacAlister - Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care
- Indra Morris - Director-General of Families Group and Senior Responsible Officer of Children's Social Care Reform Programme
- Suzanne Lunn - Director, Children's Social Care Safeguarding and Workforce, DfE
- Hannah Smith - Head of Government Response Team, DfE
- Madeleine Percival - Children's Social Care Reform Programme Director, DfE

## **Item 1: Introductions**

1. Minister Clarke-Smith thanked members for attending and expressed gratitude to the Experts by Experience for their time and contribution. It was recognised that there is an opportunity to make real, transformational change to the children's social care system.
2. It was noted that this was an interim meeting of the Board, while the process for selecting members with direct experience of the care system is underway. Charities have been asked to nominate individuals with relevant experience to sit on the Board.

## **Item 2: Terms of Reference and Conflicts of Interest**

3. No conflicts of interest were raised.
4. It was recognised that the Terms of Reference reflect that the Reform Programme is in its early stages. The implementation strategy has not yet been published, but it is important that members meet well in advance of this. The function of the Board will evolve as the programme moves into a delivery phase.
5. Members were reminded that this Board is considering the implementation of reform to children's social care with respect to recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, the National Panel review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority's report into children's social care provision.

## **Item 3: Hearing from Josh MacAlister and Experts by Experience**

6. Josh MacAlister talked members through Chapter 9 of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, which focusses on implementation of its recommendations. Having spoken with almost five thousand people with various experiences of the care system, the Review found a clear desire for change among most people. Despite some examples of good practice, the system overall is not delivering sufficiently good outcomes.
7. The Experts by Experience offered reflections on the system and the Reform Programme. It was noted that, throughout the Independent Review, people with experience of the care system had been listened to.
8. The Board wants to see many of the recommendations implemented and ensure momentum is not lost. Reforms should facilitate a move towards a more coherent system of care, so that children who cannot live with their parents are not disadvantaged by the form of care they receive.

9. Members, particularly the Experts by Experience, emphasised the need for cultural change, to ensure people do not feel mistrustful of the system and are thereby willing to seek support when needed.

## **Item 4: Objectives and Narrative for Children’s Social Care Reform**

10. Officials took the Board through the draft strategic “pillars” which group work into objectives and outcomes for the care system. These are the pillars on which DfE plans to build the reform strategy. These take recommendations from the three reviews and build from them a programme of implementation, which this Board will help oversee.
11. The objectives and narrative of the government response are still in draft form and there is further development needed on measures of success to know when they have been met. It is important that, at this early stage, commitment to the Reform Programme is demonstrated.
12. Overall, there was a positive reception from the Board to the strategic pillars and objectives. Members thought these were broadly in the right place, representing a strong foundation for future reform.
13. The Board advised on how to make the language clearer and suggested changes to the structure of the Narrative. In particular, members suggested the importance of early intervention should be emphasised. Members also wanted to see more included around support for both foster and kinship carers.

## **Item 5: Delivery Update**

14. The Board noted the positive, committed approach of government towards the Reform Programme, while acknowledging the challenging economic context. The Board was reminded that its role is not to revisit recommendations in the reviews, but to focus on how we deliver them.
15. Members noted that key risks include finance and workforce. In particular, steps need to be taken to ensure better retention of social workers.
16. Members expressed an interest in mapping out the system more thoroughly, and to establish a risk-register at a strategic level. It was noted that government should consult regularly with local authority experts to ascertain good practice.