



Children's Social Care - National Implementation Board

Minutes of meeting held on 13 December 2022, 09:00-10:30

Minister's Boardroom, and virtually via MS Teams.

Attendees

- Claire Coutinho MP - Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing. **Chair.**
- Amanda Spielman - Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted
- Angela Frazer-Wicks - birth parent/parent, Chair of Trustees of Family Rights Group
- Anne-Marie Connelly – care leaver, working within participation at Action for Children
- Sir Anthony Finkelstein CBE, FREng - President of City, University of London.
Computer Scientist
- Isabelle Trowler - Chief Social Worker for Children and Families for England
- Janet Kay - adopter and kinship carer
- 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

- Indra Morris - Director-General of Families Group and Senior Responsible Owner of Children's Social Care Reform Programme
- Fran Oram - Director, Children's Social Care – Strategy and Care System, DfE
- 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: Implementation Strategy

1. The Minister thanked members for their comments on the Implementation Strategy. It was noted that DfE have already started actioning some of the feedback received by prior correspondence, including:
 - working up a children and family friendly version of the document, with more accessible language;

- including a glossary; and
 - ensuring consultation questions are easy to understand.
2. Members emphasised the importance of outlining the distinction between strategy, implementation, and impact. DfE should be clear about the outcomes the Department are seeking for the system and how the reforms will deliver them.
 3. Members also wanted more clarity on the desired “end state”, the position in which we see children’s social care after reforms are complete, and actions needed to get us there. The focus should be on a realistic, planned timeline that assures the system can reach these desired outcomes with confidence.
 4. There was also a challenge from the Board on language – ensuring that the language used to describe people in the system reflects their individual experiences and needs and avoids technocratic terms.

Item 2: Pathfinders

5. Members were updated on the latest progress around the pathfinder programmes. These are programmes where a particular intervention or approach is being refined in a small number of local areas, ahead of potential wider roll-out.
6. The Board noted that DfE should be clear about the function of a pathfinder, which is to learn about the operational aspects of rolling out reforms, and gather further evidence on impact, building on the existing evidence base.
7. It was also noted that, when selecting local authorities to be pathfinders, it is important to work with a range of local authorities (diverse in terms of geography, population, performance etc).
8. Finally, it was highlighted that we should recognise the strengths on which we are building. There is lots of good practice and things are working well in a significant number of local authorities.

Item 3: Delivery

9. Members thought the delivery chapter, to be published with the Strategy, needed more detail and precise data. This would make it easier to understand what success looks like. Officials noted feedback and committed to bring back a revised version.
10. The Board also pushed for the Strategy to be clearer on modelling cultural change around how local authorities prioritise and support kinship carers.

Item 4: Developing the Board

11. It was agreed that members would be presented with opportunities for engaging with programmes outside of the regular Board meetings, in some cases via membership of 'task and finish' groups (groups set up to tackle specific questions or issues as part of the reform programme) and other working groups.
12. The Board agreed that developing a Children and Young People's Board (precise name to be confirmed) would be a good idea, providing another forum in which government can engage with those with direct experience of the care system.

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