



Children's Social Care - National Implementation Board

Minutes of meeting held on 22 June 2023, 12:30 -14:00

Leeds Civic Hall, and virtually via MS Teams.

Attendees

- Claire Coutinho MP, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing. **Chair.**
- 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
- Janet Kay - adopter and kinship carer
- Jill Colbert OBE - Chief Executive of Together for Children and Director for Children's Services in Sunderland
- John Pearce – President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services
- Juliette Cammaerts - Director: Policy, Planning and Delivery - Children's Commissioner's Office (deputising for Rachel De Souza)
- Prathiba Chitsabesan - National Clinical Director for Children and Young People's Mental Health (NHS England)
- Tom Riordan CBE - Chief Executive of Leeds City Council
- Yvette Stanley - Ofsted National Director for Social Care (deputising for Amanda Spielman)

Officials in Attendance

- Ailsa Swarbrick (Deputy Director, Perinatal and Children and Young People's Mental Health, NHSE)
- Alison Wilson (Regional Director for Yorkshire and Humber, DfE)
- Emma Blagg (Deputy Director, Reform Portfolio and Funding, DfE)
- Graham Archer (Director General, Families Group, DfE)
- Hannah Smith (Deputy Director, Children's Social Care Strategy, DfE)
- Shazia Hussain (Director, Children's Social Care, Safeguarding and Workforce, DfE)
- Sophie Langdale (Director, Children's Social Care Strategy and Care, DfE)

Apologies

- Amanda Spielman - His Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted

- Isabelle Trowler - Chief Social Worker for Children and Families for England
- Dame Rachel De Souza DBE - Children's Commissioner for England

Item 1: Introductions

1. Minister Coutinho welcomed members to the meeting, which was hosted by Leeds City Council.
2. John Pearce was welcomed to the Board, as President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). Graham Archer was also welcomed, as the new and interim Director General of DfE's Families Group.

Item 2: Delivery Update

3. The Board discussed the latest delivery information, which included progress updates, risks, issues, milestones, and successes.
4. Since the March meeting, there has been considerable progress including:
 - The most successful Foster Care Fortnight held to date.
 - Publication of the consultation on changes to statutory guidance around *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.
 - Three consultations have closed - on the Implementation Strategy, the National Framework, and social worker agency rates – and response analysis is now underway.
5. Delivery across the portfolio is impacted by:
 - Awaiting final clearances before the formal launch of pathfinders and pilots.
 - Ongoing recruitment to support the department as it grows and moves into delivery stage of the reforms.
6. The Board discussed approaches to implementing Regional Care Cooperatives. Members discussed the merits of focussing on specific elements (building on fostering work, targeted fostering placements, interactions across health and youth justice, secure accommodation models, analysis and market shaping) versus larger structural change.
7. NHS England (NHSE) colleagues highlighted lessons they had learned around planning and developing their own specialist children's mental health services.

Item 3: Work Programme Update

8. Board members shared updates of work they have been doing to help drive forward delivery of programmes within the *Stable Homes, Built on Love* portfolio.

9. Members have been engaged on programmes including the Families First for Children pathfinder, data/digital work, reforms to kinship care, family group decision making, and establishment of a Children and Young People's Board.

Item 4: Systems Thinking

10. Departmental analyst colleagues updated members on the work underway on systems thinking.
11. The aim of this work is to provide a holistic view of the component elements of the reforms and understanding how they interconnect. This enables better identification of potential unintended impacts and consequences arising from system change.
12. There are plans to build a model that will estimate the number of children in the system, in the future, if no reforms are made versus a system that is fully reformed, and one in which varying degrees of reform have been undertaken.

Item 5: Complex Needs

13. The Board discussed approaches to provide better care and support for children with complex needs, recognising children in this cohort often have poor outcomes.
14. Progress has recently been made on reforming unregulated accommodation, introducing mandatory national standards and Ofsted registration and inspection requirements. NHSE has created a framework for integrated care and a trauma-informed approach. Opportunities for mutual learning between DfE and NHSE were discussed.
15. The Department is building a stronger evidence base and testing approaches on this work. This work is co-owned by DfE and NHSE and forums are being established for both governance and stakeholder engagement. The focus is on developing an integrated care pathway, which will also address workforce challenges.
16. Members noted the following:
 - Provision is currently unevenly distributed across the country. There is a need for national, regional, and local solutions for children with complex needs.
 - Shared success criteria could be developed, aimed at ensuring children with complex needs are safe within the community.
 - Those working in children's homes need to be better supported and trained to meet the needs of children with complex needs in their care.
17. The minister brought the meeting to a close by thanking the members for their input and Leeds for hosting.

