



Department  
for Education

## Children in Complex Situations Task and Finish Group

### Notes of meeting on 28 April 2026

Held 10:00-10:50, virtually via MS Teams

#### Chairs

Laura Rawstone: Deputy Director, Looked After Children Division, Department for Education

Ailsa Swarbrick: Deputy Director, CYP and Perinatal Mental Health, NHS England

#### Attendees

- Laura Rawstone – Department for Education
- Ailsa Swarbrick – NHSE
- Anna Freud Centre colleagues
- Representatives from Nuffield Family Justice Observatory
- Department for Education Officials
- Department of Health and Social Care Officials
- Ministry of Justice Officials
- NHS England Officials
- Representatives from Children's Commissioner's Office
- Representatives from the Association of Directors of Children's Services
- Colleagues from RCCs and other organisations

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The chairs, Laura Rawstone and Ailsa Swarbrick opened the meeting, introduced speakers and outlined the agenda.

### 2. Programme Update

A DfE official presented updates on the programme of work. The programme is making strong progress across multiple workstreams, including working with West Sussex on the Test and Learn project, development of the £15m pilot programme (Home Again), and development of a cross-sector register to improve early identification and coordination of support for the cohort. Work is also underway to

strengthen approaches to delivering education provision for the cohort and to develop a trauma-informed workforce toolkit, supporting more integrated and effective responses for children with complex needs.

### **3. Legislation**

A DfE official confirmed the changes in legislation to amend the Children Act 1989 had progressed successfully through Parliament. The changes will introduce a new statutory framework to allow deprivation of liberty in a wider range of appropriate settings beyond secure children's homes. This aims to improve safeguards, reduce reliance on High Court orders, and provide more flexible, suitable placements, with implementation expected around 2027 and further detail to be set out in secondary legislation.

### **4. Community of Practice (Anna Freud / UK Trauma Council)**

Colleagues from Anna Freud/UK Trauma Council gave a presentation on the Community of Practice. The new "Connect" Community of Practice has launched successfully, providing a national platform for professionals to share learning, access evidence-based resources, and collaborate across sectors. Early engagement is strong, with over 1,000 members, and the platform is expected to play a key role in spreading best practice, supporting integrated working, and improving outcomes for children through shared knowledge and practical learning

### **5. AOB**

No further business was raised. The Chairs thanked presenters and noted strong interest in further follow-up work, appreciating the strong interest in continued collaboration.