

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**STABLE HOMES BUILT ON LOVE IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSULTATION STRATEGY**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Health and Wellbeing Board regarding the publication of the Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy and Consultation; and to consider the implications and our local response.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy and Consultation was published on 13 February 2022 and is the Government's response and detailed plan to address the recommendations to reform Children's Social Care, as set out in the Independent review of children's social care: Final report; Child Protection in England; and the Children's Social Care market study.

- 2.2 The Government's response is a once in a generation opportunity to reset children's social care system to transform the lives of children and families. It sets the tone and purpose of children's social care and is built around six key pillars, as follows:

1. Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families
2. A decisive multi agency child protection system
3. Unlocking the potential of family networks
4. Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care
5. A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one
6. A system that continuously learns and improves, and makes better use of evidence and data

A summary of the key strands associated with each of the six key pillars is outlined in appendix 1.

- 2.3 Stable Homes, Built on Love identifies 19 consultation questions and builds in additional consultation(s) in relation to Children's Social Care National Framework and the Child and Family Social Worker Workforce. A summary of the key strands associated with the additional consultations is outlined in appendix 2 and 3 respectively. The deadline for all consultation responses is 11 May 2023.

- 2.4 Stable Homes, Built on Love will be refreshed in two years and the Government will scale up new approaches that have been tested and developed, to be underpinned by new legislation.

### 3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the publication of the Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy and Consultation; and to support the local response to the consultations; and to contribute to further discussion regarding local implications and implementation, as part of our ongoing discussion regarding the development of the integrated children and families offer.
- 3.2 Specifically, we will need to:
- Consider any short, medium and long term financial implications in the context of our current financial envelope(s) and unknown LA allocations, and the implications for commissioning across our integrated children and families offer
  - Communicate across the partnership(s) to share key messages and raise awareness
  - Continue to work with respective local politicians and central Government
  - Share with the children and families (and wider) workforce including workforce development sessions and creative conversations to co-produce local response and solutions, as part of wider integration agenda
  - Consider how we utilise the consultation activity to further shape and influence the policy direction
  - Ensure preparedness for next iterations of the Government response and associated legislation

### 4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Stable Homes, Built on Love sets out key milestones for delivery. Phase 1 (up to the end March 2025) will focus on addressing urgent issues, setting the national direction and laying the foundations for reform. Phase 2 will focus on embedding reform, subject to funding, parliamentary time and the outcomes of related consultations.
- 4.2 Overall, we welcome Stable Homes, Built on Love and the opportunities for reform. Through engaging in the consultation responses, North Lincolnshire will continue to take up opportunities to shape and influence the national policy direction. Through the Children's Commissioning Strategy, the integration agenda and the transformation governance arrangements, including the underpinning transformation plan, we are in a strong position to be able to respond to the anticipated policy direction, leading to better outcomes.

### 5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

- 5.1 There are no specific resource implications associated with this report, though it is acknowledged that there will be resource implications associated with the implementation of the strategy in due course. Further discussions will be had and decisions made through relevant partnership and governance arrangements as appropriate.
- 5.2 Stable Homes, Built on Love focusses on an initial two year plan, supported by an additional investment of £200 million. From a Government perspective, indicative financial commitments include:
- £45 million allocated to the (up to) 12 pathfinders
  - £2 million to establish self sustaining kinship peer support groups

- £9 million in bespoke training offer for kinship carers
- £19.5 million allocated to RAA's
- £27 million for foster carer recruitment and retention programme (of which £3 million will be to deliver an initial programme in the North East)
- £30 million to increase practical interventions, befriending and mentoring programmes i.e. Lifelong Links

5.3 From a Local Authority perspective, there will be financial implications, including but not exhaustive:

- Increase of the leaving care allowance to £3000 (from April 2023)
- Increase of the rate of the apprenticeships care leavers bursary from £1000 to £3000 (autumn 2023)
- National minimum allowance for fostering to increase by 12.43%
- Financial allowances associated with kinship care (anticipate national strategy by end 2023)

## **6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

6.1 Stable Homes, Built on Love sets out the high level ambition and intent to transform the children's social care system, which pending the outcomes of consultation, will impact on the underpinning statutory and regulatory framework(s) and associated legislation.

6.2 The principles of Stable Homes, Built on Love, which is built around family, love and a safe stable reliable place to call home, resonates and aligns with Council Plan and the partnership ambition for children to be in their homes, in their schools and in their communities, as outlined in the Children's Commissioning Strategy Refresh 2022.

## **7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 No integrated impact assessment has been undertaken at this stage.

## **8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 Through the Local Design Area Review visit and associated consultation responses, North Lincolnshire have contributed to Independent review of children's social care, which was one of the key reviews to significantly contribute to Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy and Consultation

8.2 There will be a local response to Stable Homes, Built on Love and the associated consultations in relation to the Children's Social Care National Framework; and the Child and Families Social Work Workforce. These will be submitted by the deadline of 11 May 2023.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes the publication of the Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy and Consultation; supports the ongoing local response to the consultations; and contributes to further discussion regarding local implications and implementation.

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**Background Papers:**

Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy and Consultation

**APPENDIX 1: STABLE HOMES, BUILT ON LOVE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND CONSULTATION: SUMMARY OF THE SIX KEY PILLARS:**

<b>Pillar 1</b>	<b>Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive in their families</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Up to 12 ‘Families First for Children’ family help pathfinders (three in 2023 and up to nine in 2024), co-designing and delivering end-to-end service reform, with three elements:</li><li>• local, multi-disciplinary family help services</li><li>• child protection lead practitioners; and</li><li>• a focus on family networks and kinship care</li><li>• Development of knowledge and skills statements for family help workers</li><li>• Consult on enabling a broader range of practitioners to ‘case hold’ children in need cases</li><li>• Work to join up family help funding and strategy across government</li><li>• Law Commission to review CSC legislation for disabled children with a view to simplifying and streamlining</li><li>• Reference to building culturally competent practice and better responding to the needs of families facing material deprivation</li></ul>	
<b>Pillar 2</b>	<b>A decisive multi agency child protection system</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ‘Families First for Children’ pathfinders will test a new child protection lead practitioner role which will co-work with family help teams</li><li>• Consult on new National Multi-Agency Child Protection Standards in 2023 as part of the planned update to Working Together 2018</li><li>• Report to go to Parliament setting out ways to improve information sharing between safeguarding partners, including exploration of the use of a single consistent child identifier</li><li>• Strengthen leadership across multi-agency partnerships via amendments to Working Together 2018 guidance, improved accountability and an increased role for education in local safeguarding arrangements, consult on education’s role as a safeguarding partner. Following a consultation, areas will be funded to implement the agreed reforms, with Pathfinder areas being early adopters</li><li>• Act on delays and improve parental engagement in the family courts</li></ul>	
<b>Pillar 3</b>	<b>Unlocking the potential of family networks</b>
<p>Create a culture of family first by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using the ‘Families First for Children’ pathfinders, test how to implement family group decision making and Family Network Support Packages. Seven family help pilot areas to test Family Network Support Packages only</li><li>• Publish a national kinship care strategy by the end of 2023. This will include issues such as educational entitlements, training and LA practice plus related reforms e.g. financial allowances</li><li>• Training and support offer for all kinship carers (those with a legal order and informal arrangements) by the end of this Parliament</li><li>• Explore the case for mandating a financial allowance for all Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders</li></ul>	

**Pillar 4****Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care**

- Fostering recruitment and retention programme to be initially trialled in the North East region
- Continuing reforms to supported accommodation; registration in 2023, inspection in 2024
- Two Regional Care Co-operative pathfinders to plan, commission and deliver care places – the ‘all’ has been dropped and no figure on level of investment provided
- DfE to commission an external organisation to support LAs with forecasting, procurement and market shaping efforts
- Support improvements in the quality of leadership and management in the children’s homes sector – leadership programme, knowledge and skills statement, focus on CPD, considering professional registration of the residential childcare workforce
- Implement an opt-out independent advocacy, this will not replace IROs or Regulation 44 visitors
- Introduce financial oversight regime for the largest providers thereby increasing transparency and reducing risks of sudden exit
- Expert group to review standards of care, regulation and guidance and consult on legislative changes
- Funding for well evidenced interventions in family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes
- Consult on strengthening and extending corporate parenting principles to a wider set of relevant bodies in Autumn 2023
- Create opportunities for children in care and care leavers to achieve their potential with a focus on education, training and employment via Virtual School Heads, Pupil Premium+, an uplift to the apprenticeship bursary and a refresh of the care leaver covenant
- Universal offer of wrap around support and accommodation for all care leavers via an uplift in the leaving care allowance and strengthening Staying Put / Staying Close, with entitlements up to age 23
- Focus on the mental and physical health of care leavers and addressing health disparities to increase life expectancy by building understanding and skills of social workers plus other professionals
- Update existing guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of children in care and extend it to cover care leavers up to age 25
- Consult on extending the mandatory reporting of deaths or serious incidents involving children to include the deaths of care leavers

**Pillar 5****A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one**

- SWE to inspect all initial education routes by July 2025, commission research on the role of practice educators and take a greater role in overseeing them
- Development of a five-year Early Career Framework for social workers, starting with early adopters in Spring 2023 to design, develop and test ECF delivery mechanisms
- Boosting social worker recruitment and retention, including an additional 500 child and family social work apprentices, reviewing student social work bursaries and education support grants, and exploring international recruitment
- National Workload Action Group to identify unnecessary workload drivers
- Reduce the cost and reliance on agency social workers (separate consultation)

**Pillar 6****A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data**

- Introduce a Children's Social Care National Framework, supported by a data dashboard by the end of 2023 with implementation by the end of 2024 (separate consultation)
- Publish a data strategy by the end of 2023 setting out plans for transforming data in CSC and establish a Data and Digital Expert Forum
- Align inspection with the National Framework. Ofsted to rebalance how it looks at practice so it acts as a lever for improvement
- Development of a suite of practice guides, this work will be overseen by the National Practice Group
- Enhancing the DfE's intervention role and offer via a clearer interventions policy and escalation pathway, new focus on 'getting to good' in LAs rated as requires improvement
- Before the next Spending Review DfE, in consultation with Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, will aim to update, publish and consult on a new formula for children's services funding

## **APPENDIX 2: CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK: SUMMARY**

### **What is the framework?**

The framework includes:

- The purpose of CSC
- Principles underpinning leadership
- Outcomes to be achieved plus enablers and how leaders and practitioners should hear the voices of children, young people and the families they support
- The indicators that will form the CSC dashboard

### **Principles underpinning the framework**

A series of principles underpin the framework drawn from legislation, guidance and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- Children's welfare is paramount, and their wishes and feelings are sought, heard and responded to
- CSC works in partnership with families
- Children are raised by their families, in family networks, or in family environments wherever possible
- Practice engages with partner agencies at every stage of support to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families
- Practice and services are poverty aware and anti-discriminatory

### **Outcomes and enablers**

There are four outcomes which lay the foundations that enable children to thrive:

1. Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
2. Children and young people are supported by their family network
3. Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes
4. Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

There are two system level enablers that help CSC to achieve these outcomes:

1. The workforce is equipped and effective
2. Leaders drive conditions for effective practice.

Plus there are wider outcomes that public services should aspire to e.g. good education and good mental and physical health

### **The children's social care dashboard**

The dashboard brings together a set of LA level indicators via a publicly accessible, interactive form with the aim of increasing transparency and supporting learning. It is not intended to measure the performance of LAs and does not set performance targets

# One page summary of the National Framework and Dashboard

Children's Social Care National Framework - one page summary						
<b>Why does the CSC system exist?</b>	<b>Purpose</b> To help children and families, to protect children by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that children, young people and care leavers grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.					
<b>How should CSC practice?</b>	<b>Principles of practice</b>					
	Children's welfare is paramount and their feelings are sought, heard and responded to	Children's social care work in partnership with families	Children are raised by their families, in family networks or in family environments wherever possible	Practice engages partner agencies at every stage of support to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families	Practice and services are demonstrably poverty-aware and anti-discriminatory	
<b>What should CSC achieve?</b>	<b>Outcomes for children and families</b>			<b>System enablers</b>		
	Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need	Children and young people are supported by their family network	Children and young people are safe in and outside their homes	Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes	The workforce is equipped and effective	Leaders drive conditions for effective practice
	<b>Practice guides</b>					
	<b>Proposed dashboard indicators</b>					
<b>How will CSC understand progress?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of referrals which are repeat referrals</li> <li>School attendance of children in need</li> <li>Rate of new entrants to care</li> <li>Rate of assessments completed</li> <li>Rate of children in care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of section 31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents, and the age of the children in the proceedings</li> <li>% of children in care living with their family networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate and number of section 47 investigations</li> <li>Rate of section 47 investigations which result in an initial child protection conference</li> <li>Rate of new child protection plans</li> <li>% of children whose plan was de-escalated and did not present again with unmet needs in 2 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of children in care living in foster care</li> <li>% of children in care living in residential care</li> <li>Distance of placements from home</li> <li>Stability of placements of children in care</li> <li>Strengths and difficulties questionnaire scores for children in care</li> <li>Progress and attainment in Key Stage results of children in care</li> <li>% of care leavers in education, employment or training</li> <li>% of care leavers in higher education</li> <li>% of care leavers in apprenticeships</li> <li>% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social worker turnover</li> <li>Agency social worker rates</li> <li>Social worker caseloads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share of children's social care spend on children in care</li> <li>Turnover of Directors of Children's Services and practice leaders</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes that help children, young people and families to thrive</b>	<b>Long-term outcomes, achieved with partner agencies</b>					
	Good child development	Good education attendance, attainment, training, and progress	Good physical and mental health	Family stability, including housing and financial stability	Family functioning, including strong family relationships and support networks	Preventing and tackling crime

## **APPENDIX 3: CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKER WORKFORCE: SUMMARY**

### **What is the focus of the consultation?**

National rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in CSC

#### **Rationale**

- Following recommendations made in the Independent review of children's social care: final report, DfE is consulting on proposals to improve quality and reduce costs associated with the use of agency social workers
- The consultation builds upon existing regional Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation to create a set of national rules
- Subject to consultation responses, DfE intends to set out the national rules in September 2023
- By spring 2024, LAs and all procurement routes used by LAs to engage agency social workers should comply with the national rules
- DfE expects that social workers who are currently working for a local authority via an agency should be offered the opportunity to transition to permanent or fixed-term employment
- They will work with the sector to ensure "simple and effective means to complete transition" subject to the outcome of the consultation

#### **National rules**

- Engage agency workers only via commercial compliant procurement routes
- Only engage agency workers within national price caps
- Minimum of five years post-qualified experience in LA CSC and completion of ASYE to qualify for agency role
- Not engage project teams for social work
- Standard references for all candidates that relates to standard of practice for any agency worker
- Three month wait for workers leaving substantive roles before taking agency role in same region
- Minimum six week notice period for agency social workers
- Quarterly data return

#### **Procurement of social workers**

- By spring 2024, all procurement routes used by LAs to engage agency workers should comply with the national rules
- Compliance will be monitored via regular data collection and local and regional spot checks
- Agencies that circumvent national rules would be restricted by LAs from accessing new vacancies

#### **Price caps**

- Cap on the rate LAs can pay for an agency social worker
- Bring agency worker pay in line with substantive worker pay. This will take into account contract differences e.g. holiday pay
- Create greater national consistency around pay for social workers (substantive and agency) who are carrying out the same role in different LAs or regions
- Ban on bonuses which take amount of pay a worker earns over the cap

### **Post-qualified experience**

- Social workers who graduated in or after April 2024 must have a minimum of five years post qualified experience working within LA CSC and have completed their ASYE before being employed as an agency social worker
- DfE funding cannot be used to support agency social workers in the attainment of their ASYE
- International social workers –should this also apply to them?

### **Project teams**

- Project teams no longer engaged for child and family social work
- Multiple agency workers can be employed but each one contracted individually

### **Data and monitoring**

- The following data to be collected and shared quarterly:
  - agency worker job type and pay rate
  - substantive worker job type and pay rate
  - vacancies by job type
  - use of market and other supplements
  - substantive worker full time equivalent (FTE)
  - leavers FTE
  - agency worker FTE
- Data sharing agreement for data to be shared with DfE and between LA's and regions