

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

14 March 2023

Independent Care Review of Children's Social Care and National Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson

Purpose of Report

1. To update the committee on our local considerations of the findings and recommendations of these reviews.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. Each of the review's links to the priorities in relation to the 'Best Start in Life', 'The Right Skills', 'We are Safe and Vibrant' and 'Well-connected Communities'.

Background

3. This government commissioned review of the children's social care system in England began in March 2021, gathering evidence from public engagement, research and visits to local areas.

The aim of the review was to put forth recommendations for a system that:

- provides intensive help to families in crisis
- acts decisively in response to abuse
- unlocks the potential of wider family networks to raise children
- puts lifelong loving relationships at the heart of the care system
- lays the foundations for a good life for those who have been in care.

The final report and supporting evidence were published in May 2022.

4. The review suggests that the issues facing the social care system can only be addressed through a "radical reset".
 - The problem: a failure to recognise relationships and the strength of families. The children's social care system is facing increased pressure with less resources and a shrinking workforce. The current way of working by managing risks, responding to episodic need, and having high thresholds to access help, may be restricting the purpose of social care to 'rescuing' children, and keeping services from meeting the needs of families.
 - Principles and approach of the review - For reforms to be successful, there needs to be:
 - clear objectives from national government on children's social care
 - a system that works to meet children's and families' needs rather than making them fit the system
 - greater transparency, new mechanisms for learning and better inspection and intervention
 - a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce and better multiagency working.
5. Findings were divided into key sections as follows:

1. Reset children's social care - The review suggests that the issues facing the social care system can only be addressed through a "radical reset".
 2. A revolution in Family Help - A new "Family Help" approach is needed to improve children's lives through supporting the family unit and strengthening relationships.
 3. A just and decisive child protection system - Wider system improvements recommended to achieve the aims of the review.
 4. Unlocking the potential of family networks Kinship carers need greater recognition and support in the children's social care system.
 5. Transforming care - The care system should be focused on children building loving relationships with the people who care for them.
 6. The care experience Five clear "missions" are needed to focus effort on improving outcomes for care experienced people. These should be underpinned by:
 - new legislation making a wider range of public bodies and organisations corporate parents for looked after children
 - recognition of care experience as a protected characteristic
 - statutory guidance on all recommendations from the review on supporting care experienced people.
 7. Realising the potential of the workforce - To achieve the goals of the review, the children's social care workforce will need time and resources to build relationships with children and families and develop their expertise.
 8. A system focused on children and families - There are system wide barriers to achieving the aims of the review.
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6. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel conducted a national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. This panel is an independent body set up to identify, commission and oversee reviews of child safeguarding cases in England.
 7. This review looks at the circumstances leading up to the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson in 2020 and explores why the public services and systems designed to protect them were not able to do so. Whilst undertaking the review, it was clear to the Panel that the experiences of Arthur and Star were not unusual. The review therefore considers wider issues and evidence from serious safeguarding incidents reviewed in the last three years. Based on these findings, the Panel sets out a number of local and national recommendations to improve the child protection system in England.
 8. The review identifies a set of core issues that hindered professional understanding of what was happening to the children in both cases. The Panel emphasises that these are not isolated issues; they feature regularly in serious case reviews and thematic practice reviews and are:
 - Weaknesses in information sharing and seeking within and between agencies.
 - A lack of robust critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies, compounded by a failure to trigger statutory multi-agency child protection processes at key moments.
 - A need for sharper specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision making, engaging reluctant parents, understanding the daily life of children and domestic abuse.

- Underpinning these issues is the need for leaders to have a powerful enabling impact on child protection practice, creating and protecting the organisational conditions needed to undertake this complex work.

The review also highlights two important factors currently impacting the child protection system in England:

- Multi-agency arrangements for protecting children are more fractured and fragmented than they should be.
- There has been insufficient attention to, and investment in, securing the specialist multi-agency expertise required for undertaking investigations and responses to significant harm from abuse and neglect.

Main Considerations

9. In Wiltshire, The Director of Children's Services (DCS) who holds the statutory responsibility for children's services has led a piece of work to understand what these recommendations would mean at a local level, based upon current practices as well as our local views on the recommendations from each of the reviews. Some of the recommendations from the separate reviews are similar and have thus been set out together in the tables below.
10. Since this piece of work was undertaken, the DfE on 02 February 2023 published the new Children's Social Care Strategy - Stable Homes, Built on Love which is the government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, the National Panel's report into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority report on the care placement market. The reports emphasised the need for whole system change to enable families to overcome challenges at the earliest stage; keep children safe and ensure that those in care have stable loving homes.
11. The strategy is underpinned by 6 pillars set out in the diagram below (see accompanying embedded PDF document for further details). Also published is The National Framework for consultation, which includes the outcomes that should be achieved so that children, young people, and families can thrive, and sets out principles for practice in children's social care. The National Framework will set a clearer national direction for work with children and families, and, following consultation, it will be issued as statutory guidance for local authorities by the end of 2023. It will be supported by a Dashboard, which brings together a set of local authority level data indicators in a publicly accessible, interactive form, to increase transparency and support learning.

There are six pillars of reform



Pillar 1: Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families



Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system



Pillar 3: Unlocking the potential of family networks



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



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



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



Stable Homes, Built
on Love Implementa

12. Claire Coutinho MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Families and Wellbeing wrote to all Directors of Children's Services on 02 February 2023 strongly encouraging all local authorities to take the following action "right now"
 - reviewing existing support offers for kinship carers, including financial support for Special Guardians and guardians with CAOs, whilst government explores the case to legislate for a financial allowance in parallel.
 - reviewing services, you commission and provide to make sure they reflect the best evidence - the Early Intervention Foundation toolkit provides a resource to do this.
 - exploring with your safeguarding partners how to use and deploy a multi-disciplinary workforce to provide direct support that meets the needs of children and families, alongside the social worker workforce.
 - reviewing all available opportunities to support children in care and care leavers to build relationships. This includes access to family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes such as Lifelong Links, Independent Visitors and peer support schemes.
13. The strategy is backed by £200 million of additional investment. Over the next two years, phase one of reform activity. After this, the approach is to scale up tested and developed approaches and aim to bring forward legislation.
14. Consultations on the strategy and National Framework will be open until 11 May 2023. A separate third consultation on use of agency social workers, is open for the same period.
15. A working group led by the DCS will now continue, progressing the actions to be taken now, as well as our consultation responses and readiness of the reforms.

<p>A revolution in Family Help</p>	<p>This recommendation focuses on streamlining early intervention, combining targeted early help and the statutory work undertaken under children in need (section 17 of the Children Act 1989).</p> <p>This would mean setting out eligibility for Family Help in sufficient detail to provide a more consistent understanding of who should receive support. This would enable practitioners to have a conversation about concerns, rather than replying on a processed referral pathway.</p> <p>Establishing multi-disciplinary teams with autonomy to make decisions and control budgets.</p> <p>Making Family Help teams part of the community they serve.</p>
<p>Wiltshire perspective</p>	<p>We are already progressing work to achieve much of what is set out within this recommendation, within our Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Family Help programme of work; which the committee had an update in relation to in October 2022.</p> <p>If a change in guidance meant that practitioners without a social work qualification undertake work within the current statutory S17 remit; this would be a significant change. The benefits would have a positive impact on recruitment and retention, as practitioners not requiring a social work qualification are much easier to recruit and retain. However, there would need to be consideration of the inherent risk this could bring to the quality of practice and outcomes achieved for families.</p>

<p>A just and decisive child protection system – Care Review</p> <p>Develop a new approach to undertaking child protection work – National Panel</p> <p>A new expert-led, multi agency model for child protection investigation, planning, intervention and review</p>	<p>An expert child protection response - Co-working of all cases of significant harm by an “Expert Child Protection Practitioner”, who is an experienced social worker, alongside Family Help Teams.</p> <p>Improving multi-agency contributions to child protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarifying expectations on multi-agency capabilities for child protection through amendments to Working Together guidance (DfE, 2018) so that different professionals, including child protection paediatricians and specialist police officers, inform decisions. • setting out effective practice models for joint working through a new National Children's Social Care Framework. <p>Tackling extra familial harms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a bespoke child protection pathway, through a Child Community Safety. <p>Plan to enable a robust child protection response to harms outside of the home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrating government funding into a single local response to extra familial harms and investing in Family Help.
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A new role for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in driving practice improvement in safeguarding partners, The National Panel

- devolving responsibility for the National Referral Mechanism for children who experience modern slavery or trafficking to local areas.
- simplifying the experience of children in the youth justice system.

Information sharing:

- supporting local authorities, health, police and education to make the technical changes they need to effectively share data.
- improving guidance and legislation on information sharing, including information sharing agreements and audited practice
- setting government-led targets on the sharing of information between local authority and partner systems, and between different local authorities by 2027.

Parental engagement in child protection:

- promoting effective practice for engaging families through the National Children's Social Care Framework practice guides.
- offering parental representation to all families in child protection

The role of courts.

- improving the quality and consistency of local and judicial decision making through local data sharing and learning
- making proceedings less adversarial and improving parental engagement.

From the national panel:

Core recommendation: develop a new approach to undertaking child protection work.

- Fully integrated, multi-agency investigation and decision making should take place throughout the entire child protection process.
- Only those with the appropriate expertise and skills should undertake child protection work.
- Leaders should be able to deliver excellent child protection responses and create the right organisational context to make this happen.

A new expert-led, multi-agency model for child protection investigation, planning, intervention, and review:

- The development of a new operational framework for undertaking child protection investigations, including planning, delivery and review of children who are at risk of significant harm.
- The introduction of new multi-agency child protection units in every local authority, led by expert child protection social workers.
- Reformed family help services that encourage multi-agency child protection units and wider family help teams to work together.

A new role for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in driving practice improvement in safeguarding partners:

- The Panel should facilitate greater sharing of learning and insights across safeguarding partners by developing a national peer support capability for safeguarding partners, which will help

	to disseminate learning and provide more practical, hands-on support.
Wiltshire perspective	<p>We see limitations to an expert practitioner role and do not necessarily see this as the answer. Neither do we see a new expert led multi agency model, framework or units as defined in the National Panel review considerably different to how we currently practice. Our current model is based on the experience of the child, which means once a child is allocated a social worker, that social worker remains until either step down out of social care or confirmed permanence/long term care for the children i.e. long term fostering which sits within a specialist team. This is a conscious structure to ensure the relationship between practitioner, child and family is prioritised as the key ingredient to effecting positive change; based on our relationship based model of practice. Furthermore, the workforce recruitment and retention challenges means that an ‘expert’, if this is associated with length of service, will prove problematic. With robust support/challenge, high performance culture and management oversight, all social workers can be child protection experts. This in turn provides the required resilience to the workforce.</p> <p>Our ASYE Development Manager post was created many years ago to ensure newly qualified social workers are in small pods which ensure they have increased support and co-working opportunities from an experienced social worker. Child protection work can therefore be co-worked between ASYEs and an experienced social worker from the outset. We are finding that referrals coming in are more complex from the outset which means ASYEs are exposed to this work earlier in their careers. This positively increases their experience and they are protected and supported with capped workloads. The lack of experienced social workers nationally needs to be addressed by the Care Review in order to retain “experts” and reduce likelihood of experienced social workers joining agencies.</p> <p>We are pioneers in progressing the Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) category within child protection as opposed to traditional safeguarding plans where extra-familial harm exists. We are the only children’s services in the country currently piloting this as a fifth category of Abuse in child protection. We are entering a second phase of partnership in relation to this with other Local Authorities and Durham University.</p> <p>We have been successful in our bid to be part of the Home Office pilot to a devolved decision-making panel for the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The purpose of this Pan Wiltshire partnership will be to provide consistent multi-agency decision-making and effective planning in respect of NRM referrals with input from the three safeguarding partners. Furthermore Wiltshire are developing multiagency pathways for trafficked children/adults with support from Unseen, a leading UK charity fighting slavery. This is part of a Wiltshire strategy which includes policy, raising awareness and planned workshops.</p>

	<p>Our Youth Justice Service has a prevention offer which sees Wiltshire performing well; our first time entrants (to crime) is lower than all comparator groups, including national, regional and statistical neighbours. Our binary rate for reducing re-offending is also significantly lower than comparitors.</p> <p>The re-introduction of the MASH Strategic Board which took place last year will progress the consistency of partnership working, ensuring robust partnership support, challenge and oversight of effectiveness.</p> <p>Whilst information sharing protocols and arrangements are fit for purpose and enabling a robust system of practice, any reduction in potential barriers/bureacracy in this area would be welcomed.</p> <p>Following our FACT project “Family Led Review of Child Protection’ in 2020-21”, we have introduced a more family friendly approach to child protection conferences, underpinned by the principles of restorative practice. This approach aims to empower families to take ownership of their plans and to support this families are offered a family group conference at the initial child protection conference. We have set up a Family Advisory Board (FAB) which is made up of parents who have experienced children’s services. They have designed our Families and Children’s Services Pledge as well as guidance for our families who are being supported through child protection planning.</p> <p>The National Panel highlights the need for a fully integrated multi-agency investigation/decision making alongside those with the skills to undertake such work. Wiltshire has established a robust multi-disciplinary approach to child protection from our Integrated Front Door, through to strategy discussions, assessing and planning. Our Safeguarding Vulnerable Peoples Partnership (SVPP) is multi agency in nature and includes learning and sharing positive practice from a multi-agency standpoint. The sharing of learning across partners would always be welcomed, as suggested by the national panel, however care would need to be taken that this does not become a bureaucratic task as opposed to the genuine sharing of learning. We adopt a learning from positive practice approach in Wiltshire and we would like this approach to be adopted more nationally. This will impact positively on the profession’s morale.</p>
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<p>Unlocking the potential of family networks, Kinship carers need greater recognition and support in the</p>	<p>Kinship carers need greater recognition and support in the children’s social care system. Changes needed include:</p> <p>Making better use of family networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introducing a new legal right to family decision making • introducing a Family Network Plan to support care from wider family networks.
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<p>children's social care system</p>	<p>Backing kinship carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introducing a new legal definition of kinship care • giving kinship carers the financial and practical support they need to care for children without having to register as foster carers. <p>Modernising adoption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making contact arrangements between birth parents, adopted children and adoptive parents the default • facilitating technology-enabled methods of contact.
<p>Wiltshire perspective</p>	<p>We already commission a provider to deliver our Family Group Conferences (FGC). This means that family networks are fully explored in planning. Adding further plans will generate more onerous paperwork and duplicate already positive work involving families. A barrier will always be the extra costs incurred in raising a child therefore financial and practical support as suggested is essential for kinship care changes to work. We have already uplifted our Kinship Carers rates to align with mainstream fostering rates.</p> <p>Ideas around modernising adoption would need to be informed by research and may differ depending on the child and family's situation. The impact of having family time between birth families post adoption could result in a decrease in adoption because potential adopters may feel threatened by birth families and concerns of destabilisation of placements. An essential element would be excellent training/evidence based practice led by credible research, for potential adopters to understand the benefits of this approach.</p>

<p>Transforming care - The care system should be focused on children building loving relationships with the people who care for them.</p>	<p>The care system should be focused on children building loving relationships with the people who care for them.</p> <p>Setting out new care standards.</p> <p>Creating Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for planning, running, and commissioning care provision in the region. • owned and fully accountable to its constituent local authorities. • creating a new national foster care recruitment programme • providing more training and support. • giving more freedom for foster carers to make day-to-day decisions affecting. • children's lives. • using the family group decision making process to identify important adults in the child's life as potential foster carers. <p>Creating a new legal right to advocacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making advocacy an opt-out, rather than opt-in right
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • replacing existing Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Regulation 44 Visitor roles with one system • providing oversight from the Children’s Commissioner for England
Wiltshire perspective	<p>Many of the recommendations from The Care Review we already do in Wiltshire. For example, we have our Fostering Excellence recruitment campaign alongside quality continuous professional development which includes Dyadic Developmental Practice as part of our practice framework and training for our foster carers.</p> <p>We have automatic advocacy for children who attend residential respite as well as children experiencing the case conference process. Ideas around advocacy are welcomed; consideration needs to be given to children who have a learning disability to ensure these young people are represented.</p> <p>In terms of combining IRO and Reg 44 visitors into one system, we do not support the IRO role disappearing from the local authority. IRO’s play an important long-term role in children’s lives and can sometimes be the constant figure throughout a child’s experience in care owing to pressures of retaining experienced social workers. Furthermore, they provide challenge and are key players in our quality assurance framework.</p> <p>In terms of regional care cooperatives and care commission oversight, this would need to address issues around venture capital (private sector buying and selling of companies for profit) and the challenge in recruitment in the residential sector owing to poor remuneration and value of support workers (salaries lower than shop cashiers) which directly impacts on children being able to build loving relationships with those who care for them. Addressing these issues is an important part of any considerations. Any change that ensures sufficiency of provision which allows quality of matching for our children is an urgent priority.</p>

The care experience five clear “missions” are needed to focus effort on improving outcomes for care experienced people.	<p>Missions should be underpinned by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new legislation making a wider range of public bodies and organisations corporate parents for looked after children. • recognition of care experience as a protected characteristic. • statutory guidance on all recommendations from the review on supporting care experienced people. <p>Loving relationships for children leaving care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • redesigning Independent Visitor schemes. • providing family finding support to children in care and care leavers. • introducing a new lifelong guardianship order to allow young people to formally join the family of a non-related adult who is important to them.
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	<p>Increasing the proportion of care leavers attending university:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making Virtual School Heads accountable for the educational attainment of children in care and care leavers up to the age of 25. • creating state boarding school capacity for children in care • introducing a kitemark scheme to recognise universities who provide support. <p>Tackling care experienced homelessness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a range of housing options to young people transitioning out of care. • introducing a rent guarantor scheme. • increasing the leaving care grant. • removing the local area connection test and the intentionally homeless practice. <p>Increasing life expectancy of care experienced people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training professionals on identifying and responding to mental health issues. • improving local authorities' care leaver health support. • publishing Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) plans and progress on improving the health of those in care and leaving care. • commissioning research and gathering data on health outcomes for care experienced people.
Wiltshire perspective	<p>There are some positive ideas including having care leaver status as a protected characteristic that in principle we support in Wiltshire but want to ensure it is not seen as tokenistic and this are discussing with young people.</p> <p>We have an established independent visitor scheme in Wiltshire where relationships often extend beyond 18 and could easily be adapted to support care experienced young people more formally beyond 18.</p> <p>We fully support young people having supportive networks around them as other young people do however any planning such as lifelong guardian orders, virtual school head involvement, increased leaving care grant, that has any attributable costs would need to be funded as new burdens.</p> <p>We already provide some of the housing support recommendations, and for those we currently do not support are progressing to a Cabinet decision in January 2022. These relate to increasing the priority one banding status up to 25 years old and always granting a local connection. We already provide a rent guarantor scheme and plan to uplift the care grant from £2k to £3k in April 2023. Prescription charges are paid for those young people on low income.</p>

	<p>Practitioners are trained in mental health; we have a rolling programme of adolescent first aid training, as an example, and call upon local services to support young people, however other providers such as CAMHS have similar issues around retention of practitioners. We have recently secured funding for emotional well-being practitioners in our children in care teams.</p> <p>Publication and intelligent analysis of accurate data is always welcomed to better understand health trends in order that we can respond to societal patterns.</p> <p>Our Virtual School Head (VSH) has met with the Royal National Springboard Foundation as part of the DfE funded Broadening Education Pathways project. We already identifying children who would benefit from day or boarding placements. VSH links have been made with London boroughs where care leaver EET support is established to age 25 and is located with the virtual schools (VS) and Leaving Care teams. Funding mechanisms and budget allocations are being explored.</p> <p>NNECL Quality Mark is a developmental accreditation process for universities and colleges to demonstrate their support for the inclusion and success of care experienced students. This Information is being added to our care experienced young people's app, alongside existing tool 'Propel' which is used by staff to support this.</p>
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<p>Realising the potential of the workforce - To achieve the goals of the review, the children's social care workforce will need time and resources to build relationships with children and families and develop their expertise.</p> <p>Changes to multi-agency inspection to better understand local performance and drive improvement,</p>	<p>Setting out career development frameworks and addressing pay disparities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing an Early Career Framework for the first five years in the profession. • enabling career progression without leaving direct practice through an Expert. • Practitioner Pathway. • creating national pay scales to increase consistency and reward expertise. • Reducing reliance on agency social workers. • introducing new national rules on when and how agency staff can be used. • developing not-for-profit regional staff banks for temporary social workers. <p>Cutting back on bureaucracy and increasing resources for direct work with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving case management systems to reduce time spent on recording. • creating local and national mechanisms for frontline workers to challenge rules and bureaucracy that get in the way of direct work. • requiring registered social workers to spend 100 hours a year in direct practice.
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<p>The National Panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trialling ways to increase social workers' availability outside of normal working hours. <p>Developing the wider social care workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defining skills needed by family support workers and supporting development • requiring professional registration for all children's home staff • establishing a leadership programme for new children's home managers. <p>Supporting leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investing in leadership development programmes aligned with proposed reforms • addressing racial disparities across children's social care leadership. <p>Changes to multi agency inspection to better understand local performance and drive improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency inspection should play a stronger role in ensuring all areas are held to account for their multi-agency partnership working. • Inspectorates should firstly undertake an initial thematic review of multi-agency arrangements in a number of areas. A more integrated and comprehensive model of multi-agency inspection should then be developed and integrated into the ongoing work of each inspectorate
<p>Wiltshire perspective</p>	<p>In terms of the social worker training, we have a varied pathway into social work for young people/adults depending on their particular circumstances. Wiltshire has a range of options including internal apprenticeship, Step Up, Frontline, University, College, and the Open University. An Early Career Framework in our view is not realistic in terms of what research and practice is telling us. And as described further above, our ASYE pod system supports practitioners to gain experience early in their careers.</p> <p>The national crisis in the recruitment and retention of experienced social workers is primarily because of workload (thus resources) which is not factored into this vision.</p> <p>Wiltshire is focussing attention on developing our experienced practitioners. Initiatives include us exploring a level 5 social work position which reflects the British Association of Social Workers Professional Capabilities Framework model. This includes opportunities for teaching sessions, projects, research opportunities and developing a Post Qualifying pathway targeting whole careers.</p> <p>A national pay scale is viewed favourably however consideration would need to be given to areas with higher cost of living such as London as well as considering differing pay scales within different areas of social work practice.</p>

Wiltshire have proactively engaged in meetings with the Department for Education and our practitioners, as well as through the PSW national network, to ensure collaboration and understanding of the front line in terms of the need to reduce duplication, data collecting through assessing and improving IT systems that assist practice. As a result, the PSW is on a working party with the DfE to address these barriers to practice.

In terms of tackling systems, Wiltshire have consolidated five ICT systems into one across the Families and Children's Services and Education and Skills Directorates with an ongoing programme of improvement to ensure visibility, seamless working, easier oversight and reduced 'screen time'.

In terms of tackling social work agency usage, we only recruit experienced social workers as agency staff and we do not recruit for two years once they have left our authority. In terms of further details around memorandums of understandings and agency rules, we are considering a further regional agency approach in the South West in conjunction with government direction.

Social Workers working outside 9-5 hours, whilst meeting needs of families, would need to be carefully implemented to ensure retention of practitioners as the profession is female dominated and many females are parents/carers. We already utilise flexible working arrangements within the workforce which recognises and values the needs of individuals.

Managers and leaders experience practice by direct observation which can be through joint visits, observing meetings etc. Remaining in touch with front line practice is important, however, the number of hours feels arbitrary and requires more thinking. Wiltshire have developed a draft knowledge and skills statement for family support and residential staff. Alongside this a training pathway plan has been developed for all non social work qualified staff which is due to start Spring 2023. Our residential managers undergo registration requirements.

Wiltshire has a range of leadership programmes on offer through ADCS, our teaching partnership with Bournemouth University and Frontline leadership pathway. Managers with recruitment responsibilities are required to attend equality diversity and inclusion CPD. We operate a diversity management approach to recruitment and prioritise diversity in shortlisting.

We conduct annual peer challenges in the South West which are multi agency in approach, this helps us to understand our practice strengths and development areas from a multi-agency perspective. Multi agency inspections would be welcomed.

<p>A system focused on children and families - There are system wide barriers to achieving the aims of the review.</p> <p>Strengthening local safeguarding partners to ensure proper co- ordination and involvement of all agencies, The National Panel</p>	<p>Establishing a National Children’s Social Care Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting out the purpose, objectives and outcomes for children’s social care and the evidence for how to achieve this in a National Framework. • providing a “scorecard” of indicators to measure how local areas are delivering its objectives and outcomes. • providing practice guidance setting out the best ways of achieving the Framework’s objectives. • using data and feedback to prompt local and national learning to improve services. <p>Strengthening multi-agency working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amending Working Together to set out clear and equal operational responsibilities for partners; overseen by the Director of Children’s Services. • publishing partnerships’ minutes of meetings and financial information. • ensuring all individual agencies’ inspectorate frameworks include a focus on joint working; and that a joint inspection is triggered when concerns are raised. • including schools as a statutory safeguarding partner. • making government funding contingent on partners own financial contributions. <p>Ensuring proper involvement and oversight by all agencies, particularly schools, colleges and other education providers. • Agreeing a shared set of values, systems and processes for all involved agencies. • Providing greater clarity on the role and function of safeguarding partners. • Improved leadership development to support safeguarding partners.</p>
<p>Wiltshire perspective</p>	<p>DfE led research is about to launch a review of how Local Authorities and DfE can gain a holistic view of child and family needs across multiple disciplines/public sector organisations via a unique child identifier (e.g. NHS No.) Wiltshire is involved in this work.</p> <p>Wiltshire is part of regional ADCS Performance Leads group which feeds into National Performance and Information Management Group including Ofsted, OPCC and DfE representation. This work has led to new SEND/EHCP measures on the RIIA and development of standardised early help metrics.</p> <p>Wiltshire has a responsive and proactive performance team which is held in strong regard. Data/performance colleagues sit within our senior management team. They contribute towards ensuring targeted service improvement through provision of effective exception-based reporting.</p> <p>Aspects of the national panel recommendations above are already in place in Wiltshire including sharing minutes and transparency around finances. We work closely with education who are partners in our performance and outcomes board.</p>

	<p>Schools are routinely involved in strategy discussions, conferences and core groups and we have social workers with designated schools across Wiltshire.</p> <p>In terms of government funding being reliant on partner's contributions, this is an approach within inherent risk because our partner agencies are often public sector agencies and the voluntary sector and are therefore managing finite budgets and other priorities.</p> <p>Multi agency involvement is strong in Wiltshire, there are a number of multi-agency forums where purpose, values, roles and functions are clearly defined, such as SVPP practice group, which ensures up to date local/national research and learning informs all safeguarding messaging/training to all partners (combined child/adult health, police, education social work). We already have an active Education Safeguarding Committee in place.</p> <p>Our quality assurance framework and direct observation of practice includes feedback from multi agency partners as well as families/children.</p> <p>In terms of a national framework, national consistency and shared learning is welcomed however the sector would want to be integral to any decisions made around the objective and goal setting and local features would need to be taken into consideration in terms of goal setting/priorities.</p>
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A sharper performance focus and better co-ordination of child protection policy in central government, The National Panel	Clearer, stronger leadership and support from central government departments for local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This should be achieved by establishing a national child protection board, bringing together all relevant central government departments, local government, the police, education, health representatives and others.
Wiltshire perspective	From a Wiltshire perspective, focus on safeguarding is always welcomed however the purpose of the board would need to be clear as well as its aims and objectives. Performance needs to capture and measure tangible outcomes/effectiveness. Consideration would need to be given as to the realism of getting the multi-agency groups described above to regularly attend and outcomes would need to be measurable to ensure effectiveness of the board.
Using the potential of data to help professionals protect children,	The Secretary of State should convene a group of data and technological experts from a range of sectors, to look at how the use of data can be transformed to better protect children. The group should be chaired by a child protection expert and will report back on its findings at the end of each year.

the National Panel	
Wiltshire perspective	<p>Considerable data is collected within social care. We can compare ourselves to statistical neighbours, and other Good and Outstanding authorities. Data which can be analysed to inform patterns, cycles and impact is welcomed. In terms of protecting children, we work with external research partners, such as What Works and Research in Practice for evaluations and latest research to inform our practice.</p> <p>Any development of data programmes must ensure that the information is sourced without adding extra work or burden on front line operational practitioners.</p>
Specific practice improvements in relation to domestic abuse, The National Panel	<p>Safeguarding partners working more effectively with and being committed to the commissioning of specialist domestic abuse services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating guidance around effective responses to domestic abuse into the new national child protection practice framework. • Embedding domestic abuse training for practitioners across all safeguarding partners.
Wiltshire perspective	<p>Wiltshire evaluated our Support and Safeguarding Service with the Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes in 2019 and we were aware of the prevalence of domestic abuse (DA) in over 50% of our work. We have a DA strategy, services and resources for families such as the Freedom Programme, commissioned domestic abuse support service, and specialist DA practitioners. We are currently running a Dads Matter too project which focuses on working proactively with fathers. We have an established DA training pathway via our SVPP which is multi-agency in approach. Wiltshire has been involved in a DA Change Project with Research in Practice, 2021/22 which has informed national practice guidance.</p>

Public Health Implications

16. There are only positive Public Health implications to be gained as part of this work. The entire area focuses on increasing life changes of families and children.

Procurement Implications

17. Procurement implications only arise if recommendations agreed and adopted by the Local Authority require it. At this stage this is not an active consideration.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

18. All planned activity is given due care an attention to issues of equality and impact. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the Business Plan as a whole.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

19. No active considerations at this time.

Workforce Implications

20. Workforce implications only arise if changes to the planned activity are made.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

21. If there is a decision to change the planned activity of the directorate the risk implication would be taken into consideration when altering the plan and the risk service-based risk registers updated during the normal quarterly update cycle.

Financial Implications

22. Any change to planned activity would have to be discussed with the Finance Team to ensure it could be met within the current budgetary envelope or planned budget development.

Legal Implications

23. The legal implications of any change to planned activity, particularly any change to the delivery of statutory services, would have to be carefully considered and a decision made only when informed by the correct legal opinion.

Proposals

24. The Committee is asked to note the position of Families and Children's Services and await further discussion once the government has responded formally to both reviews.

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Appendix 1 – Stable Homes, Built on Love: implementation Strategy and Consultation