



Department
for Education

Working Together & Connecting the Dots

Dilemmas & deliberations

Isabelle Trowler
Chief Social Worker for England
PSW Conference Leeds 2023



Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State

- Responsible for the work of the Department for Education, including early years, childcare and children's social care.
- Previously Minister for Care and Mental Health at the Department of Health and Social Care and Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills at DfE.



Claire Coutinho, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

- Responsible for children's social care, family hubs and early childhood support, disadvantaged and vulnerable children, children and young people's mental health, SEND and alternative provision.



Baroness Barran MBE, Minister for the School System and Student Finance

- Spokesperson for the Department for Education in the House of Lords.
- Founder of the domestic abuse awareness charity Safe Lives, and its Chief Executive from 2004 to 2017.

On Thursday 2nd February, we published **Stable Homes, Built on Love** – an implementation strategy and consultation, backed by £200m additional investment.

The strategy sets out a vision to rebalance children’s social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support.

It sets out actions that seek to:

- Address urgent issues facing children and families now
- Lay the foundations for whole system reform
- Set national direction for change

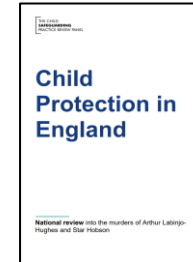
We will reform in phases, investing **£200m** over the next two years.

After two years we will refresh this strategy, **scaling up new approaches** we have tested and **bringing forward legislation** (subject to parliamentary time).

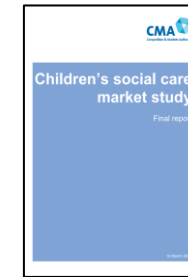
Three reviews were published last year, provided impetus and vision to transform children’s social care.



The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care



National Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson



The Competition and Markets Authority study into Children’s Social Care Placements

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



We will provide a highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one and build a system that learns and improves

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

We will better value, train and support social workers through:

- **High-quality career development.** An Early Career Framework (ECF), giving social workers more training and support. Social Work England will inspect all initial education routes for social workers by 2025.
- **Improved retention.** Support local authorities to improve working conditions and tackle workload pressures.
- **Reducing the cost and reliance on agency social workers.** Consult on whether to set national rules on agency usage, including potential price caps.
- **Boost social worker recruitment.** Explore ways to support the recruitment of up to 500 additional child and family social worker apprentices nationally.

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

Provide national direction for the system setting out its aims and how we will deliver reform:

- **Introduce a Children's Social Care National Framework:** to set out the outcomes children's social care should deliver.
- **To help implement the National Framework:**
 - **Children's Social Care Dashboard** to support learning by providing information and data on how the outcomes are being achieved.
 - **Practice Guides** to provide the best available evidence on important practice issues.
- **Improve use of technology and data:** publish a data strategy by the end of 2023 providing a long-term plan to transform data in children's social care.
- **Align inspection:** work with Ofsted to ensure inspection is aligned to the National Framework and reflects policy aims.
- **Enhance improvement and intervention:** improve the evidence base around what works to effectively support "drifting authorities" (consecutive Requires Improvement judgements) and pilot a Regional Improvement Commissioner.
- **Before the next Spending Review,** aim to update, publish and consult on a new formula for children and young people's services funding provided to local authorities.



Workforce – recruitment & retention

- Agency rules – sector loves them but are we *sure*?
- Existential crisis for social work – unique contribution?
- Dangers of care management as default
- Where NAAS would have taken SW and now losing ground?
- ECF – clarity of purpose and what do we want to achieve?
- Length of ASYE & implications of a 5 year pathway
- Skills rather than timeframes determining progression?
- Evidence base for knowledge & skill
- Local v national – PSWs & DCSs

The National Framework, Dashboard & Working Together

- Purpose, Principles, Outcomes seem to be uncontentious: offers clarity & chimes with common understanding – have other agencies paid enough attention?
- A 3rd enabler of multiagency working needed
- Sense of own agency as a CSC practitioner
- The authoritative voice on evidence
- The real purpose of the Dashboard – TRANSPARENCY
- Accountability for shared outcomes e.g. attendance (Virtual Schools)
- How will it drive change if we do this already? Clear Family First Policy
- No ambition to unrealistic (confused position)
- Alignment with inspection
- The role of the Practice Supervisor & 1st Line Manager
- Who can do what under Section 17 & Section 47 – local autonomy?
- Decision making matrix essential? Or local delegation?
- The bottle neck & delegated authority
- Separate Child Protection Standards – do we need them?
- Specificity for Safeguarding Partnerships



How are you organising yourselves at national & local level - the conversation is in the right place?

Local

- **How have you engaged your workforce so far?**
- **What percentage of your SW staff have participated?**
- **Challenge & consensus?**
- **Examples & inspiration?**
- **What next on engagement?**
- **Preparing for reform**

National

- **Do you represent the C&F SW voice?**
- **Who are you talking to?**
- **Where are the gaps?**
- **What support do you need?**
- **Raising your profile**
- **How can you be most useful to the debate? USP?**



Department
for Education