

Special Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3 October 2024

Review of Children's Care: Service update from Children's Social Care



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on:
 - (a) The Independent Review of Children's Social Care, including an update on the progress in County Durham
 - (b) Impact on children and families accessing services
 - (c) Impact on the service and information on the National Framework
 - (d) National policy / legislation which are expected in the year ahead

Executive summary

- 2 At its meeting on 11 July 2024, CYPOSC agreed its work programme for 2024/25. Included in that work programme is a special meeting focusing on the Independent Review of Children's Care, including an update on the progress in County Durham, impact on children and families accessing services, and impact on the service and information on the National Framework. This was to include information regarding any changes in national policy/legislation which are expected in the year ahead.
- 3 Arrangements have been made for the Head of Children's Social Care, in addition to representatives from her senior leadership team, to attend a special Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee briefing meeting on 3rd October 2024 to deliver this information to members of the committee.

Recommendation(s)

- 4 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
 - (a) receive the report and presentation and comment accordingly.

Background

- 5 At its meeting on 11 July 2024, CYPOSC agreed its work programme for 2024/25. Included in that work programme is a special meeting focusing on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, including an update on the progress in County Durham, impact on children and families accessing services, impact on the service and information on the National Framework. This was to include information of any changes in national policy/legislation which are expected in the year ahead.
- 6 Arrangements have been made for the Head of Children's Social Care, in addition to representatives from her senior leadership team, to attend a special Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee briefing meeting on 3rd October 2024 to deliver this information to members of the committee.
- 7 Members will find a presentation at appendix 2 of the cover report covering the following areas:
 - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care - Aims.
 - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care - Recommendations.
 - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care - Government Response.
 - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care - 6 pillars of Reform.
 - Key Policy and Publications.
 - National Framework.
 - National Progress.
 - Next Steps (pre-general election).
 - Other Key National Priorities/Bills.
 - OFSTED Big Listen and responses.
 - Local Activity aligned to reform.
 - Impact.
 - Next Steps.

Conclusion

- 8 Members of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be aware the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the subsequent Government Response, *Stable Homes Built on Love* (2023), suggested significant transformation in how we work with children and families to support and safeguard. The emphasis on working with families and their network, providing the right support at the right time from the right professional, intervening with an expert child protection workforce and providing children with homes where they feel loved and a sense of belonging was central. To achieve this, an emphasis on how we listen and respond to the voices of those experiencing services was central.
- 9 Members will note within the presentation the progress made nationally in this whole system change, and council await the direction of the current government in the next steps.
- 10 Members will see from the presentation key information specific to Social Care noted in the King's Speech which introduced the Children's Wellbeing Bill. This aims to achieve changes which place children at the centre of Social Care and Education systems. The bill sets out key expectations to enable children to grow, develop and achieve whilst recognising the diverse needs of all children.
- 11 A further area of key change is in respect of Ofsted as external regulator. The presentation highlights the need for inspection framework changes, removal of the one-word inspection judgements for schools, and placing children at the heart of inspection. Members will note councils await confirmation as to whether the one-word grade descriptor will also apply to social care inspections. In addition to the proposed changes, Members are alerted to the new Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) theme of Domestic Abuse. Members will be sighted on the previous JTAI in 2018 for Durham which focussed on Domestic Abuse.
- 12 The final section of the presentation provides for members a summary of the key areas of congruence with the areas of *Stable Homes Built on Love*. Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, the purpose is to provide assurance on the well-established commitment and principles and impact of this from multiple perspectives. This includes our principles of practice, development of specialist services to intervene and effect meaningful change, promote family network and ensure children have accessible stable homes where they feel loved and belong through permanence.

Background papers

None

Other useful documents

None

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The report and presentation reference potential legislative changes and national policy change.

Finance

The report does not consider the financial implications of system change

Consultation

No implications

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The report considers the governments ambition to promote equality in service for all children including those who would the public sector holds an equality duty

Human Rights

The report in particular considers the principles of right to family life and the nature of public body intervention to safeguard children.

Climate Change

No implications

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Staffing

No implications

Accommodation

No implications

Risk

The report considers the statutory responsibilities in delivering safeguarding services

Procurement

No implications

**Appendix 2: Presentation - Review of Children's Care: Service
update from Children's Social Care**

Attached separately