



Department
for Education

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Principal Social Worker Network Event

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Where are we now?

In February 2023, we published 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' – a children's social care implementation strategy and consultation, backed by £200 million additional investment.

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

It set out actions that sought to:

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

We are reforming in phases, investing an additional **£200m** from February 2023.

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

Three reviews were published in 2022, providing 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

Last year, significant progress was made to lay the foundations for whole system reform to children's social care



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

- Started co-design of the **Families First for Children Pathfinder (FFCP)**
- Consulted on enabling a wider range of professionals to hold cases
- Commissioned the **Law Commission** to review legislation for disabled children



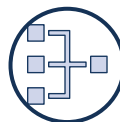
Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system

- Consulted on and published an update to **Working Together**
- Testing new pathways to protect children from harms outside the home
- Secured **£10 million** to test initiatives to address the longest **delays in family courts**



Pillar 3: Unlocking the potential of family networks

- Started to invest **£9 million** to provide training and support to **kinship carers**
- Started to test greater support for Kinship Families through the FFCP and **Family Network Pilots**
- Published the first ever National Kinship Care Strategy, '**Championing Kinship Care**'



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

- Expanded investment into **foster care recruitment and retention** (£36 million) and began work with the North East
- Started to lay the groundwork for a future financial oversight regime
- Launching expressions of interest into **Regional Care Cooperatives**
- Started a programme to fund family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes
- Started to consider how to strengthen and extend corporate parenting responsibilities

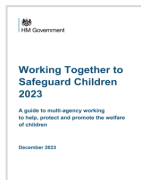
Pillar 5: A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one

- Started drafting the **Early Career Framework** to support social workers at the start of their careers with the sector
- Started to recruit additional child and family social work apprentices
- **Consulted on National Rules** on use of agency social workers

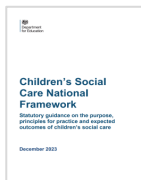
Pillar 6: A system that continuously learns and improves, and makes better use of evidence and data

- Published the **Children's Social Care National Framework** as statutory guidance
- Published a **data and digital strategy** and a paper explaining the purpose of the dashboard
- Continued to develop our evidence base for what works to support persistently "RI" Authorities

In December 2023, the Department for Education published several documents, marking the first opportunity to ask all parts of the system to respond to the vision set out in 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'



Our statutory guidance, **Working Together to Safeguard Children**, has been updated and replaces the 2018 version. It makes clear that successful outcomes for children relies on help, support and protection.



The **Children's Social Care National Framework** brings together the purpose, principles, enablers and outcomes that children's social care should achieve so children, young people and families can thrive.



Our **Data Strategy** sets out how we will transform data and additional services in children's social care. We will improve information sharing through research and evaluation, make improvements to data services and use our data and digital solutions fund to continue testing innovative practice.



Championing Kinship Care outlines the practical and financial support we will provide kinship families and is backed by £200 million investment

We are currently trying to bring about change in two ways – setting direction for a national shift in practice; whilst also working out what service transformation needs to look like on the ground (through Pathfinders), ahead of potential wider roll-out

Setting national direction

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Pathfinding service transformation

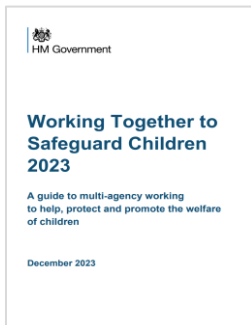
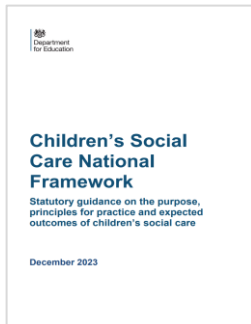
Families First for Children Pathfinder

Fostering Pathfinder

Kinship allowance Pathfinder

Regional Care Co-op Pathfinder

About demonstrating *how* to implement change – building on existing evidence of impact



What is DFE thinking about next?

Sharing learning in real time: - We are trying to galvanise the whole system to think about how they embed the vision for practice in the National Framework/ Working Together and how they start laying the foundations for broader reform. We are doing this through a series of **learning events** – and thinking about what else would help

Building the case for investment: we are making plans for the next Spending Review working closely with DLUHC and HMT. To date Government has allocated £500m earlier this year into the LGFS to help respond to social care pressures; and £165m capital was announced as part of Spring Budget, £45m for LA placements in open children's homes increasing capacity by 200

Planning for legislation: we think our reform plans cannot be delivered in full without primary legislation, so we are preparing plans for a future Bill, so we are ready whenever the opportunity arises

Context we are working in:

- Financial context for Local Government and understanding about the role CSC is playing in that
- Critical importance of better early intervention (prevention) and de-escalation of care placements (to the most family based option)
- Widespread agreement on the nature of the problem and most effective solutions

What are the next steps?

CSC National Framework Reflective Tool

We've been working with the Principal Social Worker Network Chairs to produce a reflective tool. The tool can be used to as part of reflective discussion alongside the CSC National Framework. It will support you to reflect on what the National Framework means for practice within your local authorities and partnerships. **All PSWs will receive a copy of the tool after this event.**

We would like you to use the reflective tool in conversations about practice – with senior leaders, practitioners and with other members of your local safeguarding partnership

In a future meeting of the Network, we'll be asking you to share insights into how those conversations have gone and what actions you and your local authority are taking.

Understanding practice through the lens of the National Framework and Working Together 2023

We published the National Framework and Working Together 2023 at the end of December. With the National Framework, local authorities have one year to embed the guidance within practice.

Across this year, we want to work with and learn from the sector. We're keen to understand from you:

- 1) Where good practice is happening that reflects the outcomes and expectations in the National Framework and Working Together 2023.
- 2) How you are engaging and interpreting the direction we're setting through statutory guidance

We want to do activities including:

Surveys

Interviews

Forums

Learning
events

Reviewing
cases

2024 Priorities

What happens next?

**Family Justice Board - Regional
Lead Role**

Intra Familial Sexual Abuse

Pathfinders

**National Framework & Working
Together**

Looking Forward 2025 to 2030

Some things always stay the same

Multidisciplinary practice

Institutional care

Evidence building

Keeping children with families and kinship

New arrangements for child protection

Family voice

Practice voice

Looking Forward 2025 to 2030

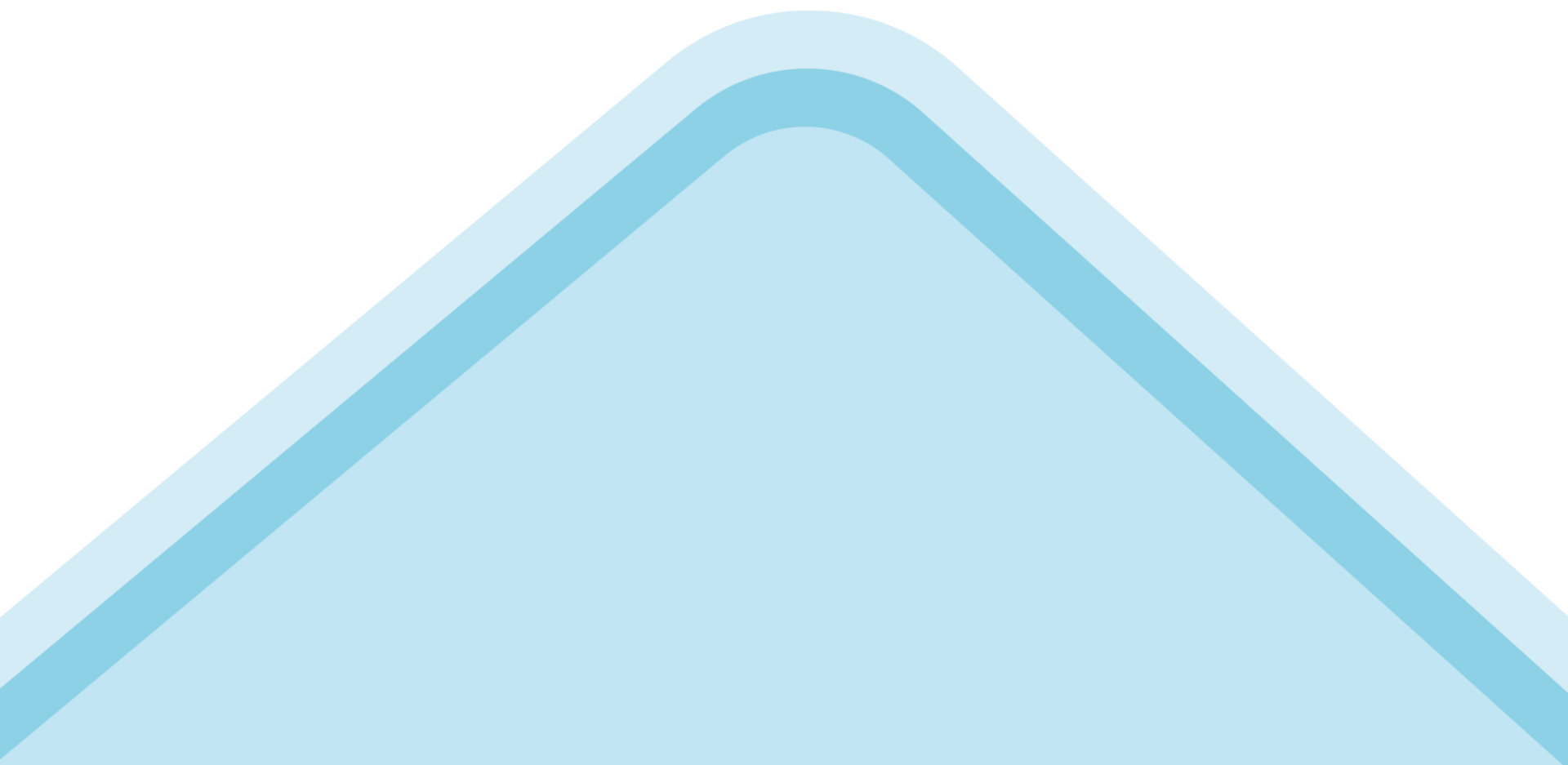
What do you want to have achieved for practice in your authority?

What 3 things do you need to focus on?

Who do you need to gather around you?

Your priorities for 2024 to support?

What's on your mind?



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A Reflective Tool for the Children's Social Care National Framework

A tool to support reflective discussion against the National Framework

As strategic leaders, we know PSWs play a critical role in supporting the National Framework being embedded into practice both with senior leaders and practitioners

Enabler: Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective

- How are you, alongside your peers within other organisations like the police and health, developing a shared approach to delivering support with children, young people and families?
- Working Together to Safeguard Children includes 5 key principles (collaborate, learn, resource, include and mutually challenge) in its expectations for practice. What does adopting these principles look like in practice?

Enabler: leaders drive conditions for effective practice

- What activities do you do to consistently and confidently, to shape the culture of practice in your local authority?
- How do you share stories about your practice in a way that shows leadership and reinforces the importance and impact of how you work with families?
- How do you make space for conversations with practitioners and senior leaders, to reflect on the conditions for effective practice in your local authority?

Enabler: the workforce is equipped and effective

- High quality supervision is key to giving space for practitioners to reflect on practice and to feel supported. How are you supporting effective supervision in your local authority?
- The evidence base for social work is constantly evolving. How do you challenge yourself to keep on top of evolving practice and to communicate this with senior leaders and practitioners?

Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need

- What activities does your local authority do to ensure that the first interaction a family has with children's social care is positive, welcoming, and empowering?
- Family relationships are complicated. How do you support practitioners to work within that complexity, providing challenge and advice?

Outcome 2: children and young people are supported by their family network

- Where could you look to shape practice so that use of tools, like family group decision making, are more widely and confidently used?
- How do you support practitioners to think creatively in circumstances that mean children and young people may not be able to be supported by their immediate family network?
 - How do practitioners record and reflect on if their creative approaches have had the intended impact on the children, young people and families they work with?

Outcome 3: children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes

- How are you collaborating with colleagues and providing constructive challenge to facilitate curiosity, learning and reflection to help keep children and young people safe?
- What relationships do you, or the wider team, need to build with organisations outside your local authority, including local charities and voluntary groups, to support and protect children from harms outside the home?

Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

- When a child or young person enters care, the whole family is affected. How does your current practice continue to support family members and carers, including with reunification (where safe to do so)?
- How do you proactively advocate for children and young people in care to achieve the best outcomes?