



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Independent Review of Social Care: Summary of Key Findings, Recommendations & Implications

Jill McGregor, Corporate Director Children's Services
July 2022






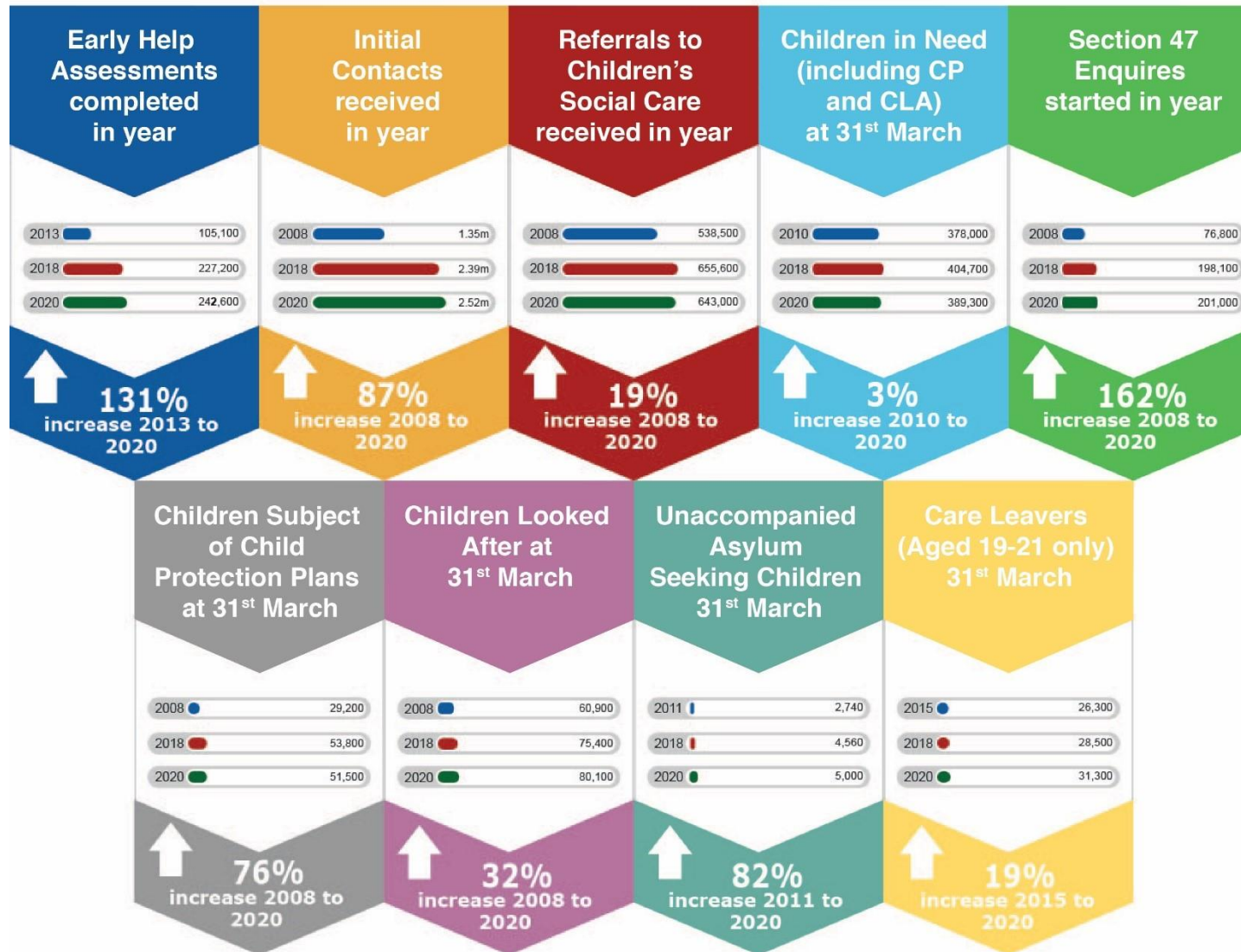
Background to the Review

- 2019 - Government's manifesto committed to reviewing the children's social care system to make sure children and young people get the support they need.
- 15th January 2021- 'Independent Review of Children's Social Care' announced. Josh MacAlister was appointed as chair.
- Review was 'wide ranging and ambitious scope' drew on previous reviews such as Munro Review of Child Protection (May 2011) as well as the Competition & Markets Authority Children's Social Care Report (March 2022)
- Review process included wide level of engagement – Including Call for Ideas , Experts by Experience panel, Carers and people who have experienced help, Evidence Groups, Design Groups, time in person with 10 local authorities, partners and stakeholders, children in care, care leavers and parents
- Report formally published 23rd May 2022 – Proposes a five year plan with new investment
- Being billed as a 'once in a generation opportunity to reset children's social care'

“Achieving this reset starts with recognising that it is loving relationships that hold the solutions for children and families overcoming adversity. While relationships are rich and organic, children's social care can be rigid and linear. Rather than drawing on and supporting family and community, the system too often tries to replace organic bonds and relationships with professionals and services”



Safeguarding Pressures: Change in children's services activity



Latest Data: Number at 30th September 2020

284,400
Referrals to Children's Social Care in the six months to 30th September

90,700
Section 47 Enquiries started in the six months to 30th September

53,800
Children Subject of Child Protection Plans at 30th September

81,900
Children Looked After at 30th September



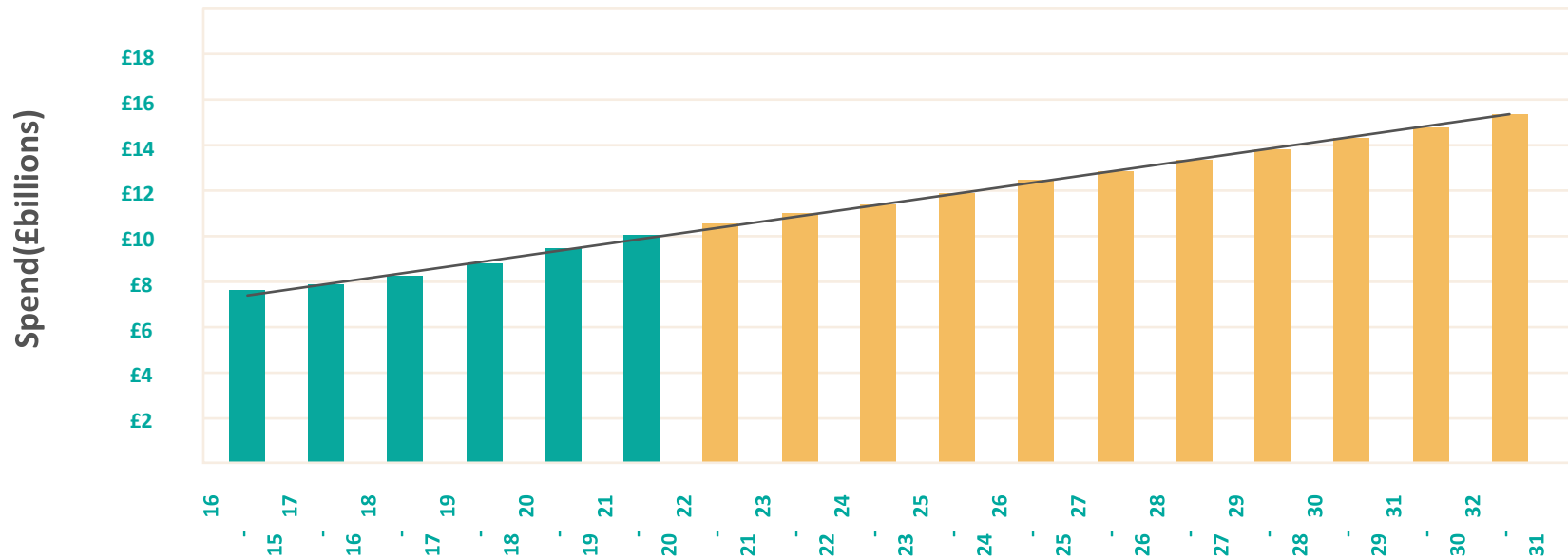
Cause for Concern

- Case for Change, the review's early thinking about what needs to change in children's social care system (2021) concluded that *“our children's social care system is a 30-year-old tower of Jenga held together with Sellotape: simultaneously rigid and yet shaky. There have been many reviews and attempts at reform since the landmark introduction of the 1989 Children Act and though each has ushered incremental progress, we are now left with a high stack of legislation, systems, structures, and services that with their sheer complicatedness make it hard to imagine something different, let alone address foundational problems”*.
- High numbers of Section 47 enquiries that do *not* progress to Children being Subject to Child Protection planning
- Rise in number of Cared for Children indicates a failure within the system – including financial but also from outcomes perspective; we know that outcomes such as health education and employment opportunities can be adversely affected
- Highlights a system increasingly skewed to crisis intervention, with outcomes for children that continue to be unacceptably poor and costs that continue to rise - & uses data to make the case
- *“Without a dramatic whole system reset, outcomes for children and families will remain stubbornly poor and by this time next decade there will be approaching 100,000 children in care (up from 80,000 today) and a flawed system will cost over £15 billion per year (up from £10 billion now).” Executive Summary of Review*



Cause for Concern

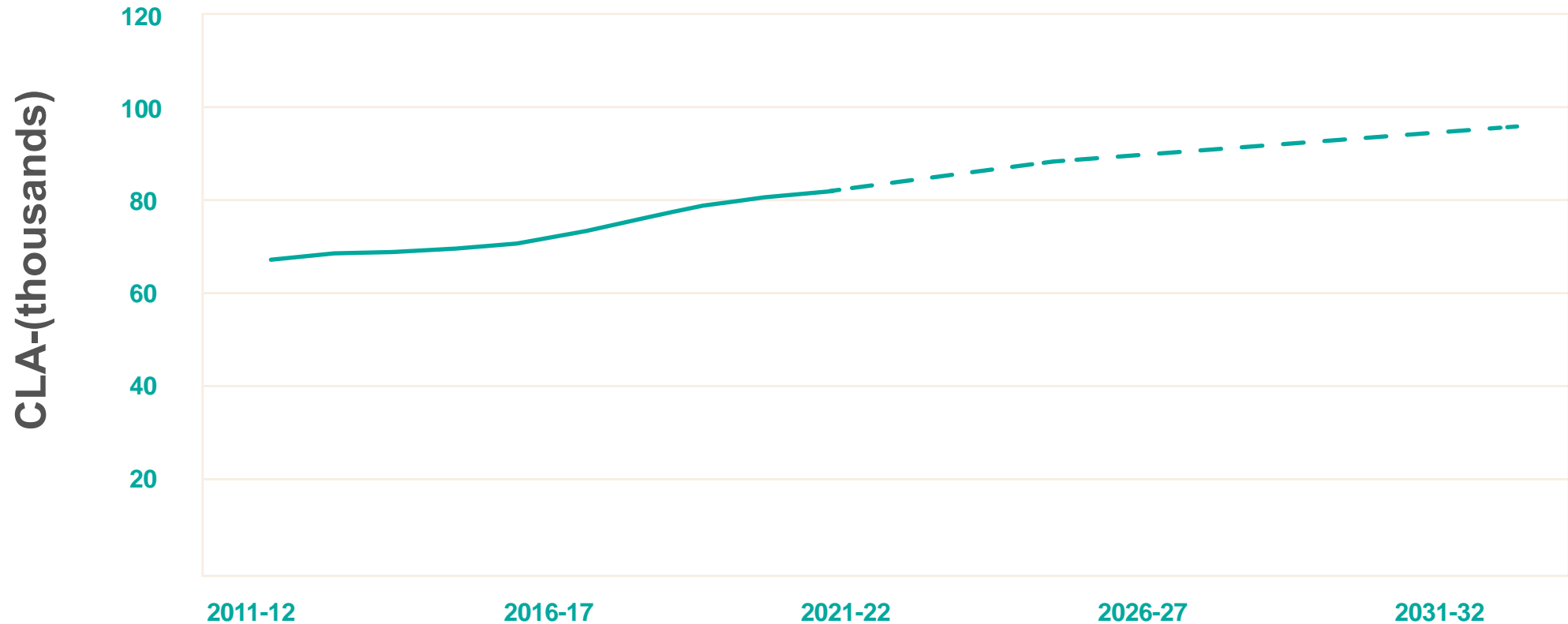
“The children’s social care system is on a trajectory of rising costs, with more children being looked after and continually poor outcomes for too many children and families. Government has attempted to reverse these trends through disjointed targeted programmes and funding pots, but these have not managed to halt the current trajectory.



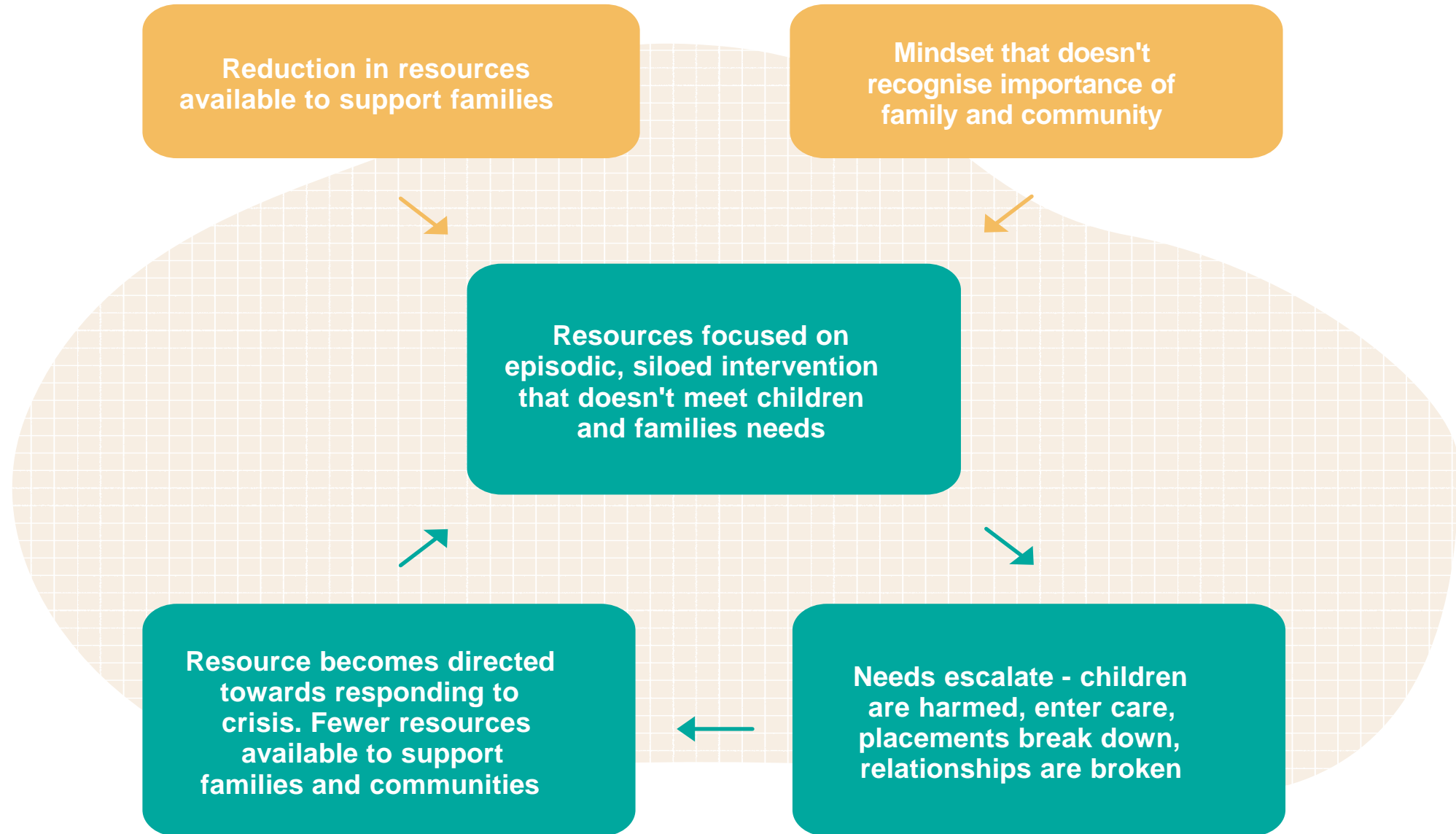
The chart above forecasts future spend on local authority children’s social care using historical data on spend across a number of categories, ¹²¹ aggregated at the national level (as reported in section 251 data), we assume that the trends in unit cost and demand for services (i.e. cohorts of children that use children’s social care services) continue as they have done over the past five years.

Cause for Concern

The chart below forecasts the number of children looked after using data on the rate per 10,000 of the 0-17 year old population as published in Department for Education (DfE) looked after children statistics, and accounts for the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) projections of the 0-17 year old population. Review has assumed that the rate per 10,000 increases at the same rate as the previous five years.



Analysis of Current System





Aim & Vision of the Review

- To achieve a fundamental shift in the children's social care response, so that families receive more responsive, respectful, and effective support.
- To reduce the number of handovers between services.
- To recommend introducing one category of "Family Help" to replace "targeted early help" & "child in need" work, providing families with much higher levels of meaningful support.
- To create a system that:

Provides intensive help to families in crisis and 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 and lays the foundations for a good life for those who have been in care.

It calls the reform a much needed a revolution in Family Help and makes 87 recommendations



The Wider Context

The report does acknowledge contextual factors impacting but there is limited exploration of those issues such as :

- **Poverty and inequality;** The review previously called for a widespread recognition and understanding of child welfare inequalities (Children who live in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods are ten times more likely to be looked after or on a child protection plan, than children in the least deprived 10% of areas (Bywaters et al, 2020).
- **Pressures in family support and other services:** “CSC picks up the needs of families which universal & other services cannot address”
- **New and emerging threats:** For example Children’s social care and the police are struggling to keep in step with technological changes and keep children safe online and from abuse outside the family.
- **Domestic abuse:** “Demand for domestic abuse services currently exceeds available supply.”
- **Mental Health:** “We see the outcomes of poor mental health acutely, and as a factor in family breakdown, premature deaths and poor outcomes for people with care experience” (Ofsted et al, 2020).
- **Substance Misuse:** “Substance misuse is also strongly linked to deprivation..”
- **Immigration and asylum:** Whilst finding homes for unaccompanied asylum seeking children is the responsibility of the children’s social care system, the asylum system is complex and makes a difficult process harder for young people

The report states that: **Government must also explicitly recognise these factors and understand how they drive the need (and therefore the cost) for children’s social care up or down and, ultimately, have a wider plan to address them.**



7 Areas of Focus for the Review

- A revolution in Family Help
- A just and decisive Child Protection system
- Unlocking the potential of family networks
- Transforming Care
- The Care Experience
- Realising the potential of the Workforce
- A system that is relentlessly focused on children and families

It also includes proposals about implementation

Review report structured around these areas – can dip in & out.



Implementation

The proposal is that

- ‘...All of this should be delivered at pace & with determination through a single five year reform programme’.
- A Reform Board should be established to drive this programme, includes people with lived experience of children's social care.
- The board should report openly on progress quarterly & the government senior official leading the programme must be given the explicit delegation & backing to accelerate through processes and controls that would jeopardise delivery.
- **Reform Board has already been established – commitment to this was given on the day of the Review being published**
- The Secretary of State for Education should be responsible for holding other government departments to account and should report annually to parliament on progress.
- *Achieving this whole system reform programme will require £2.6 billion of new spending over four years, comprising £46 million in year one, £987 million in year two, £1.257 billion in year three and £233 million in year four.*

It recognises that this might not happen – and we are already seeing some re-badging of existing cash e.g. Strengthening Families Monies seen as part of this investment; extending the DSL pilots and the SWIIS pilots as well as existing Family Hub investment



Summary of Key Recommendations

- Help for families – “A new stigma free Family Help service for families struggling with problems like domestic abuse & poor mental health based in community settings like schools.” Key to this is the notion of Family Help Teams located in communities that bring together early help and Child in Need work through multidisciplinary teams .
- Keeping children safe – “Strengthen child protection through a new expert social worker role to work alongside Family Help teams where there are child protection concerns”. Co-working of cases but with the Hub workers being consistent for families
- Unlocking the power of family networks through kinship care - “Unlock the potential of wider family networks to raise children who might otherwise be taken into care, by supporting grandparents, aunts and uncles as kinship carers” - extends the range and offer of support including financial support
- Ensure children in care have loving homes by launching new Regional Care Cooperatives
- Recruit thousands of new foster carers through a national campaign
- Provide children with powerful independent advocates” – includes removal of the IRO role
- **For Children in Care the recommendation is that five ‘Missions’ are pursued to ensure they have the foundations for a good life:**
 - Loving relationships
 - Quality education
 - A decent home
 - Fulfilling work
 - Good work
 - Introduce a protected characteristic recognising the lifelong impact of being care experienced.



Some Key Recommendations

Family Help

Creation of dedicated Family Help Teams that bring together early help and child in need and are multi-disciplinary

Family Help should take a population health management approach and respond with investment in the best evidenced approaches

Government should make an investment of £2 billion in supporting local authorities, alongside their partners, to implement the proposed transformation in Family Help.

Family Networks

Raise the status of family based care through legislation & financial parity and support – part of the solution to the ‘care crisis’.

To develop and implement Family Network Plans – that are resourced and supported by the Local Authority, diverting money that would otherwise be spent on looking after a child in care.

Provision of a financial allowance for Special Guardians and kinship Child Arrangement Orders and for this to be paid at the same rate as their fostering allowance – extending who is eligible and age range

Child Protection System

An expert child protection response provided by “Expert Child Protection Practitioner. Social workers would need to have completed a five year Early Career Framework to be “Expert”

A bespoke approach to extra familial harms – using “additional investment” in Early Help to develop bespoke multi-disciplinary response -including introducing a child community safety plan with this included in revised Working Together

Government should integrate funding aimed at preventing individual harms into a single local response to extra familial harms,

Transforming Care

Government should develop new care standards that apply to all homes where children live.

National foster care campaign

Establish Regional Care Cooperatives. These are proposed as a key mechanism for reducing profiteering, and putting the system on a path where care is not based on profit

A newly established national advocacy service for children in care and in proceedings on an opt-out basis to replace the existing Independent Reviewing Officer and Regulation 44 Visitor roles



Some Key Recommendations

The Care Experience

Broaden the role of the government, business and society in supporting care experienced people .

Make care experience a protected characteristic.

National government should issue statutory guidance to local authorities setting out the priority that should be afforded to care experienced adults in accessing local services such as social housing.

Introduce a stronger safety net against care leaver homelessness by removing the local area connection test, ending intentionally homelessness practice, providing a rent guarantor scheme and increasing the leaving care grant to £2,438 for care experienced people.

All LAs must improve care leaver mental and physical health support, & the National Children's Social Care Framework should promote the most effective multidisciplinary models of doing this.

Workforce

A nationally led programme should get social workers back to practice through:

Introducing a five year Early Career Framework for social workers

Government should produce a Knowledge and Skills Statement for family support workers; appoint Social Work England to set standards and regulate residential children's home managers; and fund a new leadership programme that could train up to 700 new managers in the next five years

Government should introduce new national rules on agency usage supported by the development of not-for-profit regional staff banks to reduce costs and increase the stability and quality of relationships children and families receive.

A system that is relentlessly focused on children and families

Partnerships should become more transparent - Schools should be made a statutory safeguarding partner and contribute to the strategic and operational delivery of multiagency working.

Govt should incentivise greater partner contributions through requiring partners to publish their financial contribution and making receiving the full funding for reform contingent on partner contributions.

Govt should introduce an updated funding formula for children's services, and take greater care to ensure that changes in government policy that impact the cost of delivering children's social care are accompanied by additional resources for local government.



Implications Nationally

- Review recognising it will **increase demand initially** but this is part of the system shift – saying 30,000 more children living with their families safely
- Implication of social worker being responsible for Family Team - **work likely to increase caseload**
- Time to potentially influence & modify some of the recommendations – ADCS have issued cautious response and continue to work the relevant departments
- **Changes will be required to statutory guidance and legislation** – Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004 as well as Working Together to Safeguard Children, IRO handbook & Regulatory Guidance
- Implications for **DCS role and Lead Member role**
- Implications for **future inspection frameworks**
- Changes **the role and expectations of the workforce** – both in relation to salary, training and roles
- Lands many of the proposed reforms in the **Human Rights space** – United Nation Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Will be **unintended consequences**
- **Different reporting and accountability frameworks** will be involved – data capture and reporting
- Feels like **déjà vu** – remember Integrated Children’s system (the first ICS!) and National Accreditation and Assessment Scheme – both defunct
- Has to be considered within the **context of wider system reforms** – Education Bill, SEND and ICS - Not to mention data analysis was backward look, not reflective of post pandemic need and demand especially mental health needs
- System will need to take into account the **learning from CSPR** – responding usually evokes a risk averse approach

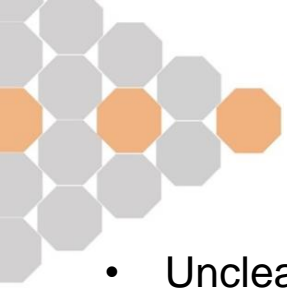


Implications Locally

Review recommendations come from a good place and a number of the principles fit with our redesign principles and strategic direction of travel and we are already doing some of this but

- Some alignment and fit with our **Family Help (Trafford Team Together) and IFS proposals** but may need to think about connectivity with CIN teams and work.
- Not been successful in our **Family Hub bid** – becomes more important to be able to progress this.
- Clear recognition needed to **multi-disciplinary teams** – but we know there are capacity challenges within the system including third sector providers and MFT capacity
- Need to **review the SF allocation** as last year we put this up for savings – clear this is part of the funding to implement reforms
- We know agreement about who is best to help and support can be contested space – thresholds!!!!
- **Managing expectations** – partnership will rightly want to see pace and traction on Family Help proposals
- We currently have **limited Family Group Conference capacity** and will need to expand that – this one is likely to be a recommendation that is supported as achieving good outcomes





Implications Locally

- Unclear how workforce proposals will help – currently there are 250 vacancies across GM according to our agency supplier – so developing pool will be challenging; average length of service for s/w 7 years but saying 5 years development programme! We currently have 40% agency staff
- Have used MFS for some s/w posts but no longer in line with region – national pay scales likely to be challenging
- We are exploring not profit agency proposals – potential opportunity
- **Removal of IRO poses significant risks** given where planning and management grip is at and we have gaps already!
- Our **advocacy offer is at capacity** and was flagged as needing to be strengthened in the last Monitoring Visit.
- We know we have **more to do to support our Care Experienced young people**
- Assumption of **joining placement finding capacity** together in regional arrangements will release capacity – part of GM sufficiency gap is number of placement taken up by out of area placements
- Working on **collaborative sufficiency** for years and not achieved it – already have a sufficiency board and included in the Children and Young People Plan
- If **funding is linked to outcomes** potential to be disadvantaged – have seen that in other funding formulas
- **High number of SGO and connected carers** – potential for significant cost increases instead of savings but the right thing to do
- **Fostering recruitment activity in Trafford is low** - and attempts to join up on GM foot print have not come to fruition
- **Changes to inspection framework when on improvement journey** – could go either way!



Next Steps

- Socialise the Review – internally and externally including at Locality Board
- Progress Family Help proposals at pace
- Continue with our plans that align and are right for us in Trafford
- Reassure staff – not least because we need to see what will be accepted and endorsed by Government
- Consider capacity and budget implications as different elements come on stream

And, most importantly.... We need to talk to our children, young people & their families about the review and the recommendations!

