

Evidence Group Terms of Reference

Background

On 15 January 2021, the government launched the independent review of children's social care. This review will be independently led by Josh MacAlister and offers a once in a generation opportunity to tackle the issues which affect children, young people and families with lived experience of children's social care.

The terms of reference for the review are available [here](#).

Aims and Objectives

The Evidence Group will bring together a range of research perspectives and experts in children's social care to ensure the review's approach is evidence-informed. The group will operate in an advisory capacity, adding their own insight and views to the work of the review.

The Group will be responsible for:

1. Advising on the most appropriate research and analytical methods to use throughout the review.
2. Surfacing evidence gaps, and, where appropriate, advising on how these should be filled to input into the review.
3. Stress testing the theory of change, impact and costs of emerging recommendations.

Members of the group will be expected to treat emerging findings of the review confidentially. They will not be expected to endorse specific findings or recommendations of the review. Decisions on the review will be taken by the lead reviewer and so the group will not have a decision-making role.

Governance

The group will be chaired by Professor Leon Feinstein. The secretariat will be provided by the care review team. Positions on the group will not be paid, although members will be entitled to claim any reasonable expenses incurred as part of the role, in line with guidelines that will be issued upon appointment.

Frequency

The group will meet virtually (until any changes in Covid-19 restrictions), roughly once every quarter. The frequency and dates of meetings will be determined by the independent reviewer based on the work of the review and so may be more or less frequent. In between meetings members may be asked to meet in smaller groups or contribute to specific aspects of the review.

Membership

Professor Leon Feinstein - Chair

Leon Feinstein is Professor of Education and Children's Social Care at the University of Oxford and Director of the Rees Centre. He is undertaking work on the measurement of vulnerability, need and risk of children and working with local and national agencies to improve use of data to improve children's lives, experiences and outcomes. Leon was Director of Evidence at the Office of the Children's Commissioner from 2016-2019. From 2013 to 2016 Leon was Director of Evidence at the Early Intervention Foundation, an independent charity and "What Works" centre, working to evaluate the impact of early intervention. From 2008 to 2013 Leon was a civil servant, working in the Treasury and the Cabinet Office on policy implementation and performance policy.

Professor Karen Broadhurst

Karen Broadhurst is Professor of Social Work in the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University. She also directs the interdisciplinary Centre for Child and Family Justice Research and leads the Society theme within Lancaster's

Data Science Institute. Karen's interests are in child and family justice, and she is recognised nationally and internationally for high quality, high impact research that has catalysed measurable change in policy and practice.

Professor Paul Bywaters

Paul Bywaters is Professor of Social Work at Huddersfield University. After qualifying as a social worker, he worked as a social worker for Birmingham Social Services Department. Paul co-founded the Social Work and Health Inequalities Network and led the re-writing of the International Federation of Social Workers policy on Health in. Paul has led and participated in a series of research projects establishing and examining the concept of inequalities in child welfare, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the MHCLG, and the Wellcome Trust.

Haroon Chowdry

Haroon Chowdry is the Director of Evidence at the Office of the Children's Commissioner, where he oversees all data and analysis carried out by the organisation including its Stability Index for children in care and its work on childhood vulnerability. Prior to this he worked at the Early Intervention Foundation, where he analysed the costs and benefits of early intervention and the costs of late intervention. He started his career at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, where he worked on analysis of education, skills and childhood policies.

Professor Donald Forrester

Donald is Professor of Child and Family Social Work and Director of the CASCADE Centre for Children's Social Care Research and Development at Cardiff University. He qualified as a social worker in 1992, and practiced in inner London until 1999. Since then he has been an academic. His research focuses on understanding the nature of good practice, exploring links between practice and outcomes and evaluating ways in which practice can be improved.

Lisa Harker

Lisa is Director of the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, an organisation seeking to improve outcomes for children and families by ensuring that decisions in the family justice system are informed by data and research.

Dez Holmes

Dez is the Director of Research in Practice, a charity that supports evidence-informed practice with children, families and adults. She is also the Programme Director for the Practice Supervisor Development Programme and the Tackling Child Exploitation Programme. Her particular interests are focused on adolescent and transitional safeguarding, and participatory work with families and young people.

Janet Kay

Janet is a member of the review's Experts by Experience Board. Janet is a former social worker and lecturer from South Yorkshire, and is an adopter and a kinship carer. Janet campaigns for improved adoption and kinship care support and also volunteers as an Independent Visitor and peer mentor for adopters.

Professor Geraldine Macdonald

Geraldine is Professor of Social Work at the University of Bristol. Geraldine is a registered social worker, and has worked as a social worker and senior social worker. She was Business Director for Information and Knowledge Management in the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Geraldine's research and publications have focused on improving outcomes for children and adolescents, with regard both to family support and addressing the consequences of adverse childhood experiences. Geraldine is also a Director of CORAM/BAAF.



Chris Wild

Chris is a care-experienced member of the Experts by Experience Board and a care sector professional. He is a former residential house manager for semi-independent care homes for young people and has also worked in children's homes. As well as running his own independent care business supporting charities and organisations in the sector, Chris is also an author and a passionate campaigner and advocate for young people in care and care leavers. In Chris's work, he has spoken and written extensively about his own experiences in the care sector, historic failures in the care system and the issues faced by young people in care today.

John Simmonds OBE

John Simmonds is Director of Policy, Research and Development at CoramBAAF – the national membership organisation for the child placement sector. John qualified as a social worker in the early 1970's and has a career in practice, academia and policy and practice development. He is the adoptive father of two children, now adults.

Oliver Southwick

Olly is an Associate Director in children's services data at not-for-profit Social Finance. He supports councils to use their data – alongside the voices of children, families and staff – to better understand needs, assess what support is working and improve outcomes for children and families. In children's services, Social Finance supports councils to bring siloed data together with lived experience to really understand how to improve support. With a PhD in mathematical modelling, Olly's belief is that analysis and evidence can transform public services, and that the closer that analysis and evidence is to decision makers, the more impact it has.

