

Independent review of children's social care newsletter: October 2021

- Chair's introduction
- Your feedback on the Case for Change
- 'Focus on' stigma and kinship
- Listening to Children and Young People
- Local authority Deep Dives
- In case you missed it

Introduction from Josh MacAlister - chair of the review

National Care Leavers Week is coming to a close as this newsletter reaches you. I've had a busy week hearing first hand from children in care or those who have recently left and reading one of the many reports summarising many months of meetings and workshops. It's inspiring to hear so many remarkable stories and an important reminder of who this review is really about and why it's so important we get it right.

October also saw us celebrate Kinship Care week (read more about our 'focus on' event below) and National Adoption week - altogether it's been a great month for celebrating the huge variety of people impacted by children's social care and hearing lots of ideas for what needs to change.

Thanks as ever to all the amazing people I've met and learnt from this month - from staff and children at a children's home in South Yorkshire and residential school in South Cumbria, to young people at the #CareLeaversCan conference run by North Yorkshire's Leaving Care Team, to experts at the APPG session on family hubs, and birth parents at the NSPCC / Care Review roundtable on reunification.

As we bring this month to a close, we are also seeing a shift in focus for the review team - we're moving from analysing the problems and your feedback to us on what needs to change to focussing firmly on ideas and thinking about tangible solutions. To help this process and give everyone a way of sharing their ideas, we will soon launch a 'Call for Ideas'. We want to give everyone an equal chance to share their thoughts - from big system changes to very specific ideas. We'll share more information about how to feed into this soon.

Josh



Your feedback to the Case for Change

On 13th October, we published a summary of the more than 300 submissions we received in response to the Case for Change.

The summary offered an overview of the points you raised and responses you gave us to questions we posed. We highlighted where there is agreement as well as where views differ and shared where people or organisations want to challenge how we have considered the evidence.

We hope that sharing our thinking and openly sharing feedback will get us to better answers and recommendations at the end of the review.

You can read the summary here:

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/the-case-for-change-your-feedback/>

'Focus on' events - stigma and kinship

October saw us hosting two 'focus on' events to provide a chance to debate and discuss some of the big issues the review team are grappling with.

During Kinship Care week we held an event with the charity Kinship where over 100 people joined our panel to discuss the question: why is kinship care not recognised as the national resource that it is?

You can watch the event here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjiyOvTwty0>

And earlier this week, during National Care Leavers Week, around 200 people joined us for a conversation on the stigma care experienced people can face hosted by Become - the national charity for children in care and care leavers.

You can watch the event here: <https://youtu.be/70sAae139fo>

We are planning to hold three more 'focus on' events around the three dilemmas Josh shared last month - keep an eye out for sign up details in the coming weeks.

Listening to Children and Young People

This week we published a number of reports detailing our engagement work with children and young people since June including:

- A report detailing our engagement with hundreds of children and young people:
https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/IRCSC_Engagement_Summary_October_V_28.10.21.pdf
 - A more accessible summary designed for young people:
https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/IRCSC_Youth_Summary_October_V_26.10.21.pdf
- 

- And a report from Coram Voice which details the work we commissioned 'A National Voice' ambassadors (a group of 24 care experienced young people aged 16-25 from across England) to undertake to hear from young people through workshops with Children in Care Councils.
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/latest/anv-response-to-the-care-review-published/>

Please read these reports – they capture what children and young people are telling us in their own words. This is a review of children's social care and it's important that the voice of children is not lost in what can easily become conversations about systems and processes.

We're extremely grateful to all the young people who so generously shared their insight for both of these pieces of work and are carefully analysing all of the feedback in the reports.

Local Authority Deep Dives

The review team are working with ten local authorities as part of our local area design process and since September we have been undertaking 'Deep Dive' visits to these areas.

By listening to a really broad range of people involved in children's social care, from those with lived experience to social workers and other frontline staff as well as senior local authority leaders these visits are allowing the review team to understand how local systems work.

The visits are helping the review to understand how different factors in local areas affect the delivery of services, getting a real sense of place and building ongoing relationships so that we can test thinking when we start to develop recommendations.

As well as local authority teams, we are also meeting staff from other local services including police, health services, schools, community and third sector services. Conversations are covering the many challenges local areas face in their work with children and families including: how organisations join up and work together; supporting children in care and care leavers; providing the right homes; keeping children safe; and helping children and teenagers who are at risk of harms outside of the home for example through county lines and sexual exploitation. The team have also been meeting children in care, care leavers and parents through these visits.

We have visited six local authorities so far, with four more scheduled over the next few weeks. We will share more information on this work, including a list of the areas and why we chose them in November. And of course a summary of what we learned from the visits will be published to share the incredibly rich information we have gathered through this process.

In case you missed it:

- The **Competitions and Markets Authority** published an interim report on their study of children's social care. They outline concerns about availability of appropriate homes and the way the 'market' works when finding homes for children.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-outlines-concerns-on-availability-and-price-of-children-s-care>
- 

- We published a number of blogs this month from our experts by experience - Esi shared her experience as a black adopter and foster carer, Janet talked about life as a kinship carer and Charmaine blogged about the misconceptions and stigma care experienced people can face:
<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/news/>
 - Josh took part in a Q&A for the latest issue of Children and Young People Now:
<https://twitter.com/cypnow/status/1453248628768784388>
 - A long read but Richard Devine's thoughts on family help were really thought provoking:
<https://twitter.com/RichardDevineSW/status/1451515461619920898>
 - Josh was interviewed for the Family Rights Group podcast:
<https://twitter.com/FamilyRightsGp/status/1445753228407181321>
 - Barnardos Care Review Collective (a group of care experienced young people) shared their ideas for what the review should recommend
<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/a-care-system-that-cares>
- 