

Evidence Group

25th November 2021

Attendees

Evidence Group members:

- Leon Feinstein, Evidence Group Chair
- Paul Bywaters, Evidence Group
- Lisa Harker, Evidence Group
- Dez Holmes, Evidence Group
- Geraldine Macdonald, Evidence Group
- John Simmonds, Evidence Group
- Oliver Southwick, Evidence Group
- Karen Broadhurst, Evidence Group
- Donald Forrester, Evidence Group

Review Team:

- Josh MacAlister, Chair
- Duncan Dunlop, Independent Adviser to the Review
- Evidence Group Secretariat
- Review Team Members

Observing:

- What Works for Children's Social Care representative

Apologies:

- Haroon Chowdry, Evidence Group
- Janet Kay, Experts by Experience Board & Evidence Group
- Chris Wild, Experts by Experience Board & Evidence Group

Agenda Item 2: Draft vision for children's social care

The vision statement is a starting point for the review team to begin thinking about recommendations. The vision has been discussed with a group of care experience people who shared their feedback, and we will also be sharing it with the Expert by Experience Board. Josh thanked the evidence group for sharing any comments in advance of the meeting and welcomed any other verbal feedback from the group.

Discussion

- Family and kinship in East London study looked at the impact of relational health in this community which may be helpful for the review to read when talking about social

relationships in the vision. Some of the group suggested that the terminology around relational health may not be suitable for all children/young people, parents and practitioners and that the vision should be considered so that it is clear and accessible to all.

- The vision may not be the place to discuss accountability and responsibility, this might be for the aims and aspirations.
- Rights is an important part of this and the way it is written recognises this, but it could be even more explicit and include discussion of the need to consider how to balance children's rights and families' rights.
- The group offered to support any redrafting.
- The focus on relationships is good but it is not enough, and it is too narrow.
- Consider including a sentence on contextual factors and how the workforce would deliver this vision.
- Suggestion that it could be structured by what the purpose of children social care is, and then how it should be done followed by what is necessary for this to be possible.

Actions

- The team will speak to other groups on the vision and then consider the feedback from all the groups (5,1)

Agenda Item 3: Ideas for recommendation development

- The evidence group shared their ideas for possible recommendations and the discussion included:

System factors

- Improving professional development for social workers to increase knowledge and skill
- System alignment - we should surface the obstacles that social workers face by other organisations
- Changes to Ofsted inspections but acknowledge that some caution is needed here
- Cross government and local authority data review to assess fit of existing data to the needs of the system. Include voice information which is recognised in the system as data
- If we want a learning/improving system, then we need LAs to be able to analyse effectiveness of their services with data
- Changing the funding formula for local services
- Improve consistency of people and services for children and families
- Making 'parents as partners' a reality through system wide change

Children in care, care leavers and kinship

- Record data on voices and how they are currently heard in the system and how could we improve this
- Change the binary of In / Out of Care. Adopt the 'samvaer' approach, perhaps
- Support for kinship carers
- Re-define 'permanency' as continuation of relationships with people who care about your throughout your life

Family help

- Better support for teenagers at risk of extra-familial harms
- Greater accountability in the family justice system
- Remand fostering. Shared Lives for young people (and parents potentially). Mockingbird for residential.
- Need to close the gap between what parents need and what is offered
- Take a collaborative approach to the ethos of the family court processes
- Non-stigmatising approach to help so parents can go and seek help without judgment and teams should be able to meet the needs with their skillset rather than pass them on
- Chief early help worker and a principle early help social worker in each local authority

Agenda item 4: Data gaps and next steps

- Postponed agenda item in the interest of time.

Agenda Item 5: AOB

- An idea that the group should regroup to look at evidence for any recommendation.
- Reminder to please submit and share the Call for Ideas.
- The minutes from the previous meeting will be published if no other comments are sent through by Friday.
- Leon and Josh thanked the group for joining and the meeting was drawn to a close.