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## **Introduction from Josh MacAlister, review chair**

Welcome to February's update on the work of the independent review of children's social care. Since the start of this year, the whole team has been focussing on the important task of drafting the recommendations which will make up the review's final report. With spring now almost within touching distance, it feels like we are coming into the final sprint after a long marathon.

Despite the wild weather this month I've had the opportunity to get out on visits and meet people across the country. A highlight for me was meeting young people from the Barnardo's Care Review Collaborative and hearing their ideas first hand. Other highlights include visiting the peer support programme Family by Family in Stoke, spending time at the Mockingbird programme in London and speaking virtually to the Black Care Experience conference. I also took the opportunity to show Children's Minister Will Quince some of the bright spots in children's social care including programmes New Beginnings, Pure Insight and Lifelong Links. We also visited children and staff at Marydale Lodge secure children's home in St Helens.

Thank you to everyone who has given up their time either to host visits or share their stories. In a month which saw Care Day 2022 celebrated with a theme of 'Together we are community', it's been truly inspirational to see and hear what can be achieved by and for the care-experienced community.

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## **Care Day 2022**

Since its launch in 2016 Care Day has grown to become a wonderful day of celebration and a powerful platform for children in care and care-experienced adults. To mark Care Day 2022, George Downing a care leaver and member of Become's 'The Sky's the Limit' design team, wrote a blog for us. George talks about the ambitious project – where care leavers have worked together to reimagine and redesign leaving care:

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/celebrating-the-power-of-the-diverse-but-close-knit-care-experienced-community-this-care-day/>

We also published an update from the review for younger readers which draws on themes covered in Josh's 'building recommendations' blog and which we are sharing with children & young people who we've met during the review. Read it here:

<https://sway.office.com/ObET46l05EAKvPOd?ref=email>

## **APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers Spotlight Inquiry**

This month the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers published the final report of their Spotlight Inquiry. The inquiry was launched at the start of the review and the final report reflects on the findings from conversations with over 300 people with experience of the care system, including 130 care-experienced young people. The report examines what community means, how to reduce the stigma of care and outlines areas the review should address:

<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/improving-the-care-system/appg/spotlight-inquiry/>

We're really grateful to everyone who took part and to the Parliamentarians who chaired the inquiry sessions. Huge thanks to Become – the national charity for children in care and care leavers who act as secretariat to the APPG and who made this work possible. The review team are reflecting on the findings as we draft recommendations.

## **What Works for Children's Social Care seminars**

What Works for Children's Social Care is the review's 'what works' partner and has supported the review by producing and commissioning evidence summaries, rapid reviews and new analysis. The bulk of the evidence produced by the What's Works Centre will be published alongside our final report in spring, however we have decided to publish some reports and analysis ahead of the final report.

What Works for Children's Social Care will be hosting webinars to share findings, the first session, on Thursday 31st March at midday, will be on improving reunification outcomes. They have shared the information below about the event:

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What services and interventions improve reunification outcomes for children and young people who have been in care? What does the evidence say about support to help children who return home to thrive in their families? In a free webinar, What Work for Children's Social Care will be joined by Professor Rick Hood from Kingston University, who will share the findings of his recent research on reunification – considering how children are supported to return home after a period of care and how families are supported to make sure the return is successful.

You can register for the webinar here and the research will be available on the What Works for Children's Social Care website after the seminar.

[https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/0ectMGec2USmo\\_FdYDiulA,5boBEMbZIEiJ9ui0VjtxCw,HMlmb7KEZ02Q0iYuEe8FfA,mmWgJEZL6U6LUvnDk7FYlw,T8CKVIZH20q9HyYQaMscUg,ieMTgaA-x0mbOjs5HD19tA?mode=read&tenantId=302de7d1-9c67-44d9-a6a3-f15d6038ae94](https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/0ectMGec2USmo_FdYDiulA,5boBEMbZIEiJ9ui0VjtxCw,HMlmb7KEZ02Q0iYuEe8FfA,mmWgJEZL6U6LUvnDk7FYlw,T8CKVIZH20q9HyYQaMscUg,ieMTgaA-x0mbOjs5HD19tA?mode=read&tenantId=302de7d1-9c67-44d9-a6a3-f15d6038ae94)

## Shared with the review team this month

This month has seen several other organisations sharing feedback through reports and events with the review and more widely:

- The review team has held joint meetings with the Council for Disabled Children to ensure we continue to consider this important constituency within children's social care. In this blog, Aimee, a member of the National Children's Bureau's 'Living Assessments' project, shares an update: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/news-opinion/what-needs-change-childrens-social-care-system-expert>
- At the end of January the Children's Commissioner published 'Children's Social Care – putting children's voices at the heart of reform' a report based on the voices children and young people in care, setting out a vision for what the care review needs to achieve: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/childrens-social-care-putting-childrens-voices-at-the-heart-of-reform/>
- Parent Families and Allies Network (PFAN) published 'Children's Social Care, the Way Forward' – a report offering suggestions for transformational change in children's social care: <https://www.pfan.uk/the-way-forward/>
- The Black Care Experience held a conference to raise a united voice around challenges faced by Black children and young people in care. You can view a recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX2lAdX6hL8&t=7s>

- Action for Children has published a report 'Too Little, Too Late: Early Help and Early Intervention Spending In England' which uses data from local authorities over the last five years and finds that there are over 60,000 missed opportunities to offer early help every year.

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/policy-reports/early-help-is-a-critical-public-service/>

- Newly formed campaign group #ShowUsYouCareToo is calling for the review to recommend care experience is made a protected characteristic.

<https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/care-day-josh-macalister-urged-to-recommend-care-experience-becomes-protected-characteristic>

## In Case you missed it

- The Welsh Government announced a Basic Income pilot to run for three years to extend support for care leavers turning 18:

<https://gov.wales/basic-income-care-leavers-wales-pilot-announced>

- 'Conversations with the care community' – a podcast to mark Care Day 2022 from '5 Nations 1 Voice' – an alliance of five charities across the UK and Ireland:

[https://soundcloud.com/user-944933034/5n1v-care-day-podcast?utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/user-944933034/5n1v-care-day-podcast?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

- Westminster hall debate on kinship care for babies. Watch back here:

<https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/3d63f509-54b5-4982-84ca-b870a8e06246>

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If you know someone who might be interested in receiving this email please ask them to sign up here:

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