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Introduction from Josh MacAlister, review chair

Welcome to our latest newsletter (coming to you a few days late but I hope you had a good bank holiday break). As we move closer to concluding the review, we know that people are keenly anticipating our final report and recommendations. I'm sorry not to be able to share a publication date with you, but please be assured the team and I are just as keen to cross the finish line after a very intense period focusing on the final report. We're crossing t's and dotting i's and making sure we've done justice to the time many of you have invested in this review through meetings and submissions.

I've taken the occasional welcome break from this focussed work over April including an afternoon spent with young people from the Children's Society who were keen to find out more about the review. They spoke eloquently and powerfully about their own individual experiences of children's social care and as always, I came away determined to do justice to their willingness to share their experience by making the recommendations as ambitious as possible.

On the horizon for this month, I will be speaking at the NSPCC's 'How Safe are our Children' conference - I plan to share my speech on our website afterwards so it's open to all. Protecting children from abuse is a topic which recent tragic child deaths have brought into sharp focus. Later this week I'll be visiting Action for Children's family support & domestic violence teams in Newcastle, which will be a fantastic opportunity to see the benefits of intensive family help in action.

Thanks for your continued interest in the review. If you have friends or colleagues who might also like to receive these updates please encourage them to sign up. We will be sharing the report early on publication day with everyone who is signed up to this newsletter and we're keen to reach as many people as possible.

Assessment and decision-making in children's social care

What Works for Children Social Care have published a rapid evidence review on 'Improving quality of decision making & risk assessment in Children's social care' - something the review commissioned to help inform our final recommendations. Assessment and decision-making in children's social care is a challenging and complex area of practice and decisions can have long-reaching implications. This rapid evidence review looks at what factors affect the quality and effectiveness of decision-making and how it can be improved.

<https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/improving-the-quality-of-decision-making-and-risk-assessment-in-childrens-social-care-a-rapid-evidence-review/>

What Works for Children Social Care webinars

To accompany this rapid review, and another on 'Improving chances of successful reunification for children who return home from care', What Works for Children Social Care have hosted two webinars with Professor Rick Hood from Kingston University.

You can watch back here: <https://vimeo.com/user118804360>

Also shared this month

Here's a run down of a some of the reports of interest to the review team in April:

- Family Rights Group published an evaluation of Lifelong links, a programme which connects young people in care with loved ones. The analysis found that Lifelong Links led to improvements to children's mental health and wellbeing and children being more settled in their foster care or children's home:
<https://frg.org.uk/news-blogs-and-vlogs/news/make-not-break-new-study-finds-lifelong-links-improves-children-in-cares-mental-health-and-wellbeing/>
 - Ofsted published a report 'Why do children go into children's homes?' using data collected from 113 children in 83 children's homes in 2019. The report finds that in two-thirds of cases, children were moved into children's homes because other placements had broken down, whether it be fostering, another children's home, or living at home with family:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/why-do-children-go-into-childrens-homes>
 - The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory published 'The care files: exploring the experiences of teenagers entering the care system'. The research examines the support older children received before and after entering care to better understand what a system that responds well to needs of older children and their families would look like:
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<https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/resource/the-care-files-exploring-the-experiences-of-teenagers-entering-the-care-system>

- The LGA and Revolution Consulting produced this analysis around profit making and risk in independent placement providers in children's social care

<https://www.revolution-consulting.org/2022/03/28/protecting-children-from-market-dynamics/>

In case you missed it

- A summary of our engagement with care experienced people (over 25):
https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IRCSC_Adult_Engagement_Summary_V_29.03.22.pdf
- A summary of our engagement with the children's social care workforce:
https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IRCSC_Workforce_Engagement_Summary_V_29.03.22_2.pdf
- Care Experienced History Month has been celebrating the achievements of care experienced people everywhere this month:
<https://twitter.com/CEHMUK>
<https://www.careexperiencedhistorymonth.org/>
- Family Rights Group have called for a universal definition of kinship care and highlighted problems faced by kinship carers due to the lack of clarity around their role:
<https://frg.org.uk/news-blogs-and-vlogs/news/time-to-define-kinship-care/>
- BBC Radio 4's Word of Mouth discussed the importance of the language used around children in care.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0016h3l>
- #YouCanAdopt podcast, where Nicky Campbell talks to Experts By Experience board member Angela Frazer-Wicks about her experiences of adoption from the perspective of a birth parent:
<https://www.youcanadopt.co.uk/birth-parents-with-nicky-campbell/>

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