

# NINE

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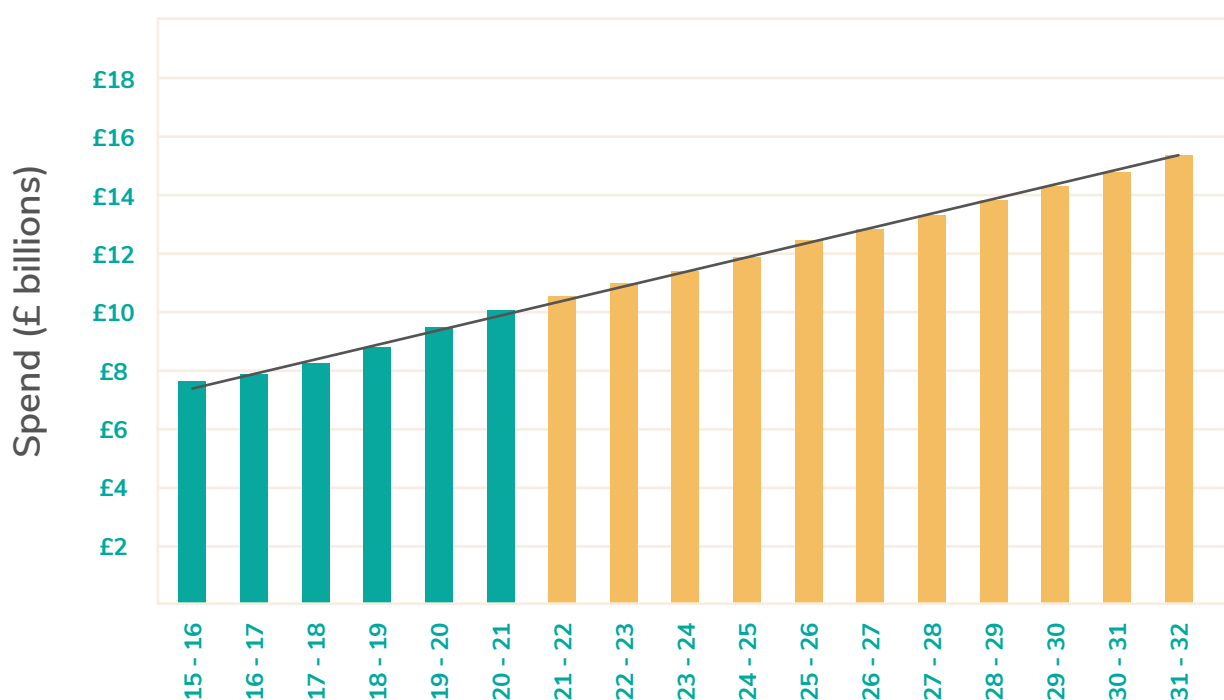
## Implementation

# 9.1 Reform and investment structure

The children's social care system is on a trajectory of rising costs, with more children being looked after and continually poor outcomes for too many children and families. Government has attempted to reverse these trends through disjointed targeted programmes and funding pots, but these have not managed to halt the current trajectory. The comprehensive multi-year reform programme of recommendations set out in this report can reset the system, improve outcomes and make children's social care more sustainable in the future.

The alternative is to continue as we are, with spending increasingly shifting to late and costly crisis intervention, draining what little remains of practical and intensive earlier support for families. The question is whether additional investment goes to reform and long term sustainability or instead is spent propping up an increasingly expensive and faltering system.

Figure 1: LA Spending on Children's Social Care is forecast to continue to rise

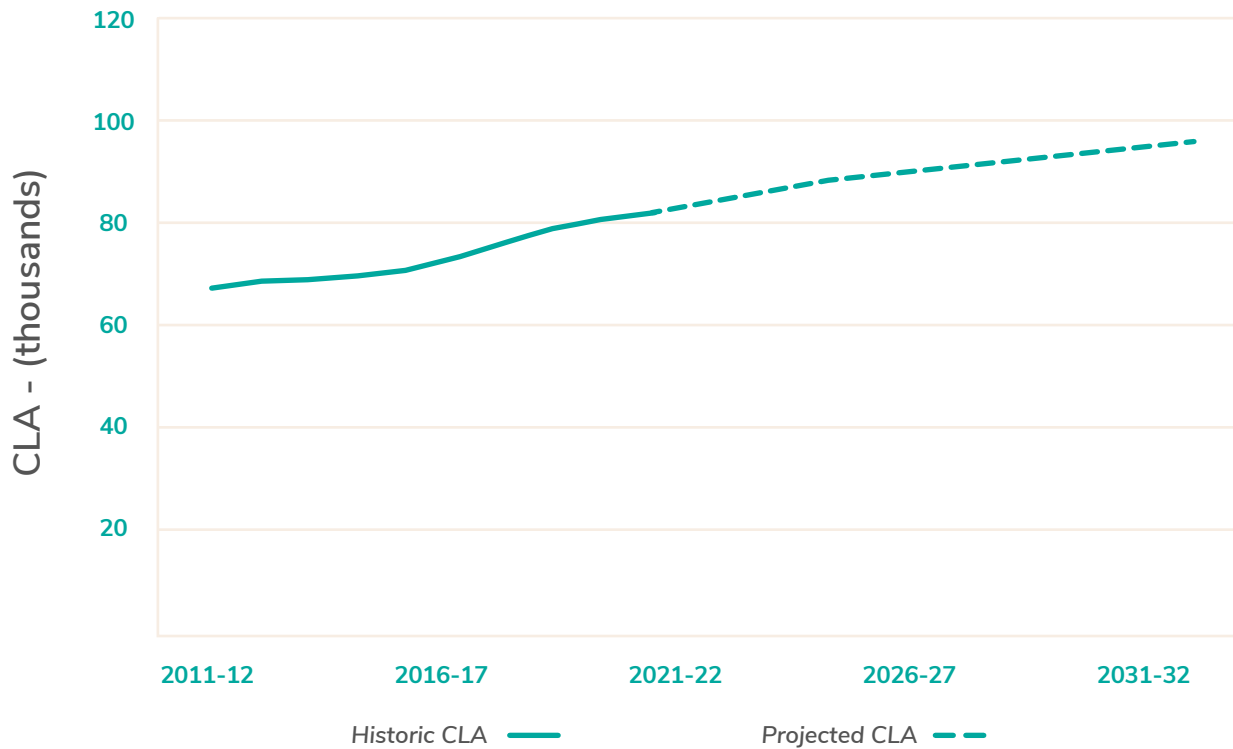


The chart above forecasts future spend on local authority children's social care using historical data on spend across a number of categories,<sup>121</sup> aggregated at the national level (as reported in section 251 data), we assume that the trends in unit cost and demand for services (i.e. cohorts of children that use children's social care services) continue as they have done over the past five years.

121 These costs approximate children's social care spend by local authorities. There is no agreed definition of children's social care spend, but the aggregate presented here includes all those Children and young people's services lines from the Section 251 return except: 3.4.5 Universal family support, 3.5.1 Universal services for young people, 3.0.1 Spend on individual Sure Start Children's Centres, 3.0.2 Spend for services delivered through Sure Start Children's Centres, 3.0.3 Spend on management costs relating to Sure Start Children's Centres, 3.0.4 Other spend on children under 5, and 3.6.1 Youth justice.



Figure 2: The number of children looked after is set to continue to rise



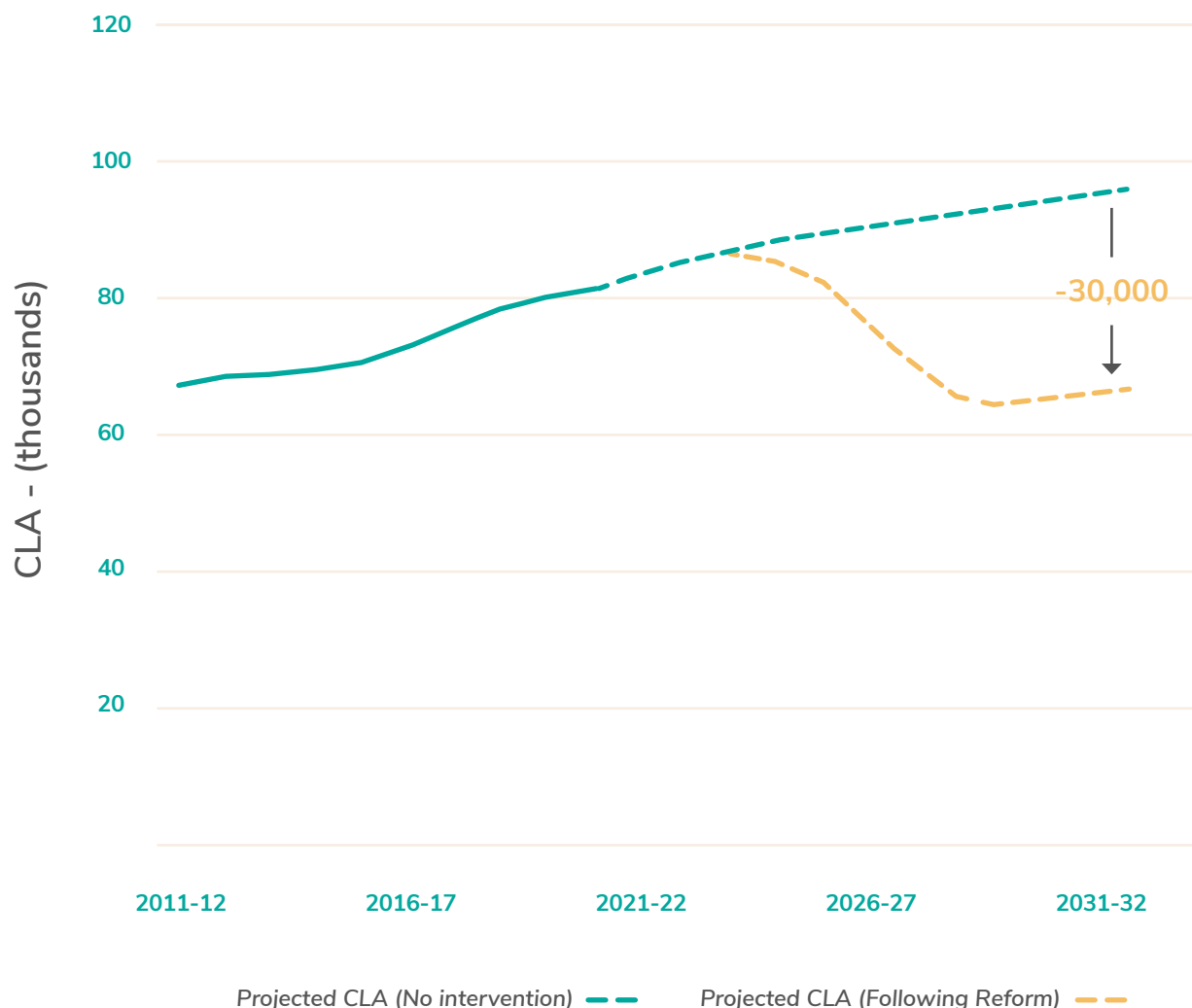
The chart above forecasts the number of children looked after using data on the rate per 10,000 of the 0-17 year old population as published in Department for Education (DfE) looked after children statistics, and accounts for the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) projections of the 0-17 year old population. We assume that the rate per 10,000 increases at the rate it has done over the previous five years.

The comprehensive reform programme needed to turn this tide and give children and families what they need will require £2.6 billion of new spending over four years, comprising £46 million in year one, £987 million in year two, £1.257 billion in year three and £233 million in year four, plus an additional estimated £50 million on other interventions over the investment period.<sup>122</sup> This can be funded by bringing forward spending that is forecast to be needed over the coming years.

Investment in the comprehensive reform programme outlined by this review will deliver cashable savings within children’s social care that can be reinvested for children and families over the medium-term, reduce wider public spending pressures and also provide social benefit in improved outcomes for children and families. This investment programme would last until 2026/27 and by that point more children will be living safely with their families, supported to live in their wider family networks or have their needs better met in an improved care system. By 2027/28, the legacy of the investment will allow for self-sustaining improvement.

<sup>122</sup> The £50 million is made up of approximate costs, that have not undergone a full cost benefit analysis (CBA) but have been estimated by the review team over 4 years to (1) modernise adoption contact, (2) establish the National Practice Group to set practice guides and advise on the Framework, (3) establish the Data and Technology Taskforce, (4) Increased social worker time in practice, (5) develop more decisive interventions and establish intervention commissioners, (6) implement a new measure of child and family satisfaction and (7) provide training and support for new corporate parents.

**Figure 3: Our set of reforms will mean that more children are able to remain safely with their families or family networks**



The chart above compares the forecast of looked after children in figure 2 (Projected CLA), to the forecast reductions of children in care projected as a consequence of our recommendations that has emerged from our cost benefit analysis (CBA). The line showing ‘Projected CLA (following reform)’ represents the CLA projection, minus the sum of the estimated reduction in children in care across all the recommendations that underwent a full cost benefit analysis (CBA) process. It assumes no overlap or complementarity between different recommendations that may have an effect on this projection if the package were to be implemented in full. It shows that in 2032-33, there will be 30,000 fewer children looked after than in our counterfactual scenario. Of the 30,000 fewer children looked after, 17,000 will benefit from better family help; 10,000 from improved support for kinship and family network arrangements; and 3,000 from interventions to improve workforce expertise and a scaled up family finding programme - all of which contribute to reducing the number of looked after children.



## 9.2 Components of this investment and reform

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Local authorities will need the freedom to deliver this change programme for their communities within a clear national framework. There will need to be accountability for the investment being made, but also efforts to strengthen system learning along the way. National government should support and serve local delivery of these reforms through a combination of the measures set out in this report - more and better data for learning, changes to legislation, revised inspection, support for the workforce and the National Children's Social Care Framework that defines the objectives and outcomes for the children's social care system. This framework will guide the investment and should be accompanied by training and support for senior leaders in local authorities.

All of this and more should be funded through a single comprehensive reform programme called *Relationships Protect*. This will avoid the re-creation of disjointed pots of funding and overlapping programmes and it will support whole system change led locally. A subset of recommendations that would form part of *Relationships Protect* represent a critical path of interdependent measures which should be delivered in sequence to release cashable savings that can be reinvested to improve outcomes at pace.

This critical path of reforms and additional investments is made up of the following:

- **A revolution in Family Help:** Roughly £2 billion on building the new and high quality Family Help system that is able to comprehensively respond to entrenched family difficulties.
- **Unlocking the potential of family networks:** £23 million must be invested to bring parity between the support given to foster carers and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) / kinship Child Arrangement Orders (CAO), and to establish Family Network Plans which will mean more children staying within a loving and safe family network.
- **Homes for children in care:** £76 million to recruit 9,000 more foster carers, to support them better, and to establish new Regional Care Cooperatives – which will provide more homes which are better connected to communities and with carers who can provide the loving long term support for children.
- **Realising the potential of the workforce:** £253 million to ensure we have enough skilled social workers who can spend more time supporting children and families directly and acting decisively when there are child protection concerns.

This list of critical path measures does not reflect all - or even the most important - of the review's recommendations, only those that are most interconnected. The description of phasing below sets out why these are so interdependent to deliver the entire programme.

## 9.3 Phasing

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**Our proposed phasing and timetable is set out below.** In responding to the review, the government will need to consider the pace and sequencing for recommendations, taking account of financial, legislative, workforce and organisational constraints, as well as the wider context of other reforms that might impact the sector. However the government decides to sequence reforms, we would expect the aspirations and level of ambition to match that set out by this review.

### First steps (by end of 2022)

Government will need to start work immediately and during the first six months publish a **White Paper**, which sets out a full government response to the review. Government will need to consult on the most significant changes it intends to make through a **new Bill** in the final session of this Parliament. At the same time it should establish **Relationships Protect** as a major programme and put in place appropriate governance to oversee delivery and implementation. That governance should build on the approach we have taken to the review - first and foremost placing lived experience at the heart but also working with those who lead and work in the system. Alongside this broader commitment to reform, an immediate priority for government should be to launch a **new foster carer recruitment programme**. Prioritising this recommendation, which will deliver 3,000 new foster carers each year from 2023, will reduce pressures on residential care and mean that children in care - particularly teenagers - are more likely to get the home and care they need. This initial step will also lay foundations for the later introduction of Regional Care Cooperatives.

The development of a **National Children's Social Care Framework** will bring together in one place the objectives, outcomes, indicators and practice guidance to support system improvement. Whilst it may not be possible to have all indicators ready within six months of publication (particularly where we have identified new data collections), government should make early progress by appointing members of the National Practice Group who will advise on the overall Framework and develop practice guides, agreeing the outcomes and indicators where possible. This should be supplemented by starting to make changes to the existing professional development programmes for the **workforce**, including the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and other social work development programmes, to start aligning them with the future Early Career Framework (ECF).

### Roll out (by Spring 2024)

In the 18 month period between January 2023 and Royal Assent of a new Children's Social Care Bill, implementation should focus on the delivery of recommendations which do not require legislation, or where foundations need to be laid in preparation for legislation being passed in Spring 2024.

The first version of the **National Children's Social Care Framework** should be developed by mid-2023, alongside amendments to *Working Together*. The Framework should be accompanied by confirmation of the resources that local authorities will have to deliver



reforms in the initial years of *Relationships Protect*, with the majority of additional resources from 2024/25, to give a sufficient lead in time so that local authorities can develop plans and bring partners together to hit the ground running. Launching the Framework will encourage local authorities to begin delivering other practice-based recommendations, such as **family finding** (an enabler for the mission to ensure that every young person leaving care has at least two loving relationships) and **parental representation** (so that families are able to more fully engage with court proceedings).

During this period we will expect to see areas begin to transform their **Family Help** offer, using additional funding that is provided as part of an overall uplift to the Supporting Families Programme and enabled by amendments to *Working Together* - in preparation for a significant uplift of funding the following year. Investment in Family Help will, over time, significantly increase the number of children who can live safely with their families and improve their outcomes.

To ensure greater retention and upskilling of social workers, during this phase the Department for Education (DfE) should start to roll out the **social work Early Career Framework** so that the first cohort of social workers can complete the five year framework in around 2028.

Finally, government should lay foundations for reforms which will come through new legislation in the next phase of implementation. In anticipation of radically increasing the number of children who grow up within their wider family network, this should include a new programme of **peer support and bespoke training for kinship carers** in every local authority. Other priorities should include launching a new **leadership programme for children's home managers**, addressing immediate pressures in residential care and paving the way for Regional Care Cooperatives. The **foster carer recruitment programme** will have begun delivery, and local authorities should be encouraged to approve these carers within their new Regional Care Cooperative footprints, in anticipation of these being established in law by spring 2024.

## Full flight (Spring 2024-2027)

During this phase we expect the remaining bulk of recommendations to commence and start yielding benefits. Preparation work done in the previous phase will reduce the time required between the Bill gaining Royal Assent and full implementation commencing.

Neighbourhood **Family Help** Teams will be coming online, representing a substantial increase in the support offered to families facing significant stress, under a simplified legal framework where the focus is on practical and skilled help not assessing and referring. These teams will be tailoring services to local population needs, be multidisciplinary, making increased use of evidence based interventions, and be based in and working alongside the local community. Child protection cases will be co-worked by some of the most experienced practitioners and a unique identifier will have been implemented and significant progress made towards frictionless sharing of information.

Legislation will establish a new **Family Network Plan** and a mandatory **family group decision making** process, which gives time and space for families to develop their own supported and funded plans for care. Whilst we expect some local authorities to join those who already pay **Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)** and **kinship Child Arrangement Orders (CAOs)** an

**allowance** in advance of legislation, all SGOs and kinship CAOs will now be legally entitled to an allowance which matches the fostering allowance in their area. Changes to **legal aid** will also give kinship carers better access to independent and qualified legal advice before making life changing decisions and new kinship carers will be legally entitled to a period of **kinship leave**.

Having been established in shadow form prior to legislation, **Regional Care Cooperatives** should become fully operational from early 2025. The introduction of Regional Care Cooperatives will start to turn the corner on the sufficiency crisis, and more children will be found homes close to their friends, families and communities (unless it was not in their best interests to do so). A better grip on the market will bring about substantial reductions in the profits made by private children's home providers and independent fostering agencies. For children growing up in foster care or residential care, changes to legislation will provide them with a legal right to **advocacy** on an "opt-out" basis, which allows young people to access their rights and have a say in decisions which affect them. When young people reach the age of 18, they will now also have a legal right to request a **Staying Put** or **Staying Close** arrangement so they can remain living with the foster carer or remain connected to the children's home they have grown up in until 23 years of age. **New care standards** will mean that by 2025 all children in care will be living in homes where they receive care.

Finally, legislation will allow government to set national **social worker pay scales**, which align with progression through the already established Early Career Framework, and increase recruitment and retention of social work staff.

## Legacy (post reform programme 2027 beyond)

At this point in the reform programme, we expect all recommendations in this report to have been implemented and the children's social care system will be achieving better and more sustainable outcomes for children and families.

An ongoing **ring-fenced Family Help Grant** will lock in diverted spending (over £1 billion more annually) on responding to families needs earlier. Taken together with better support for kinship carers, this increase in children being able to live safely with their families will have led to reductions in the number of children in care. Government and local authorities will have choices about where to invest to further improve outcomes for children and families.

Outcomes will already have been improved for families, who will now be able to access community based non-stigmatising Family Help, and Regional Care Cooperatives will have brought an end to the sufficiency crisis which, for children who cannot remain within their family networks, means they will remain connected to their friends and wider community. At a system level, the latest version of the National Children's Social Care Framework will be supporting a self improving system, within which actors have high levels of freedom and responsibility, and better data, to make decisions.

Outcomes and social attitudes towards those who have a care experience will be improving, in large part as a result of introduction of care as a protected characteristic and a wider corporate parenting responsibility. The system's obsession with building lifelong loving relationships around those who have been in care, will have replaced a view that relationships can be provided as a service.





## 9.4 Investment profile

The review has aimed to provide costings for our recommendations that are as comprehensive as possible. The table below sets out the recommendations on which we have carried out a full cost benefit analysis. There are other recommendations where the review has provided an estimated cost - these are set out in individual recommendation annexes. In a small number of instances, we have not been able to provide the cost of recommendations, either because the information needed to cost the recommendation is not publicly available, such as the administrative cost of implementing the review to central government departments, or because we have left discretion for government and the sector to consider how best to implement recommendations which would affect both costs and benefits. Government will need to consider any further costs that this review has not been able to estimate, as well as continuing to refine the costings we have presented as part of implementation.

### Impact on public finance (£millions)\*

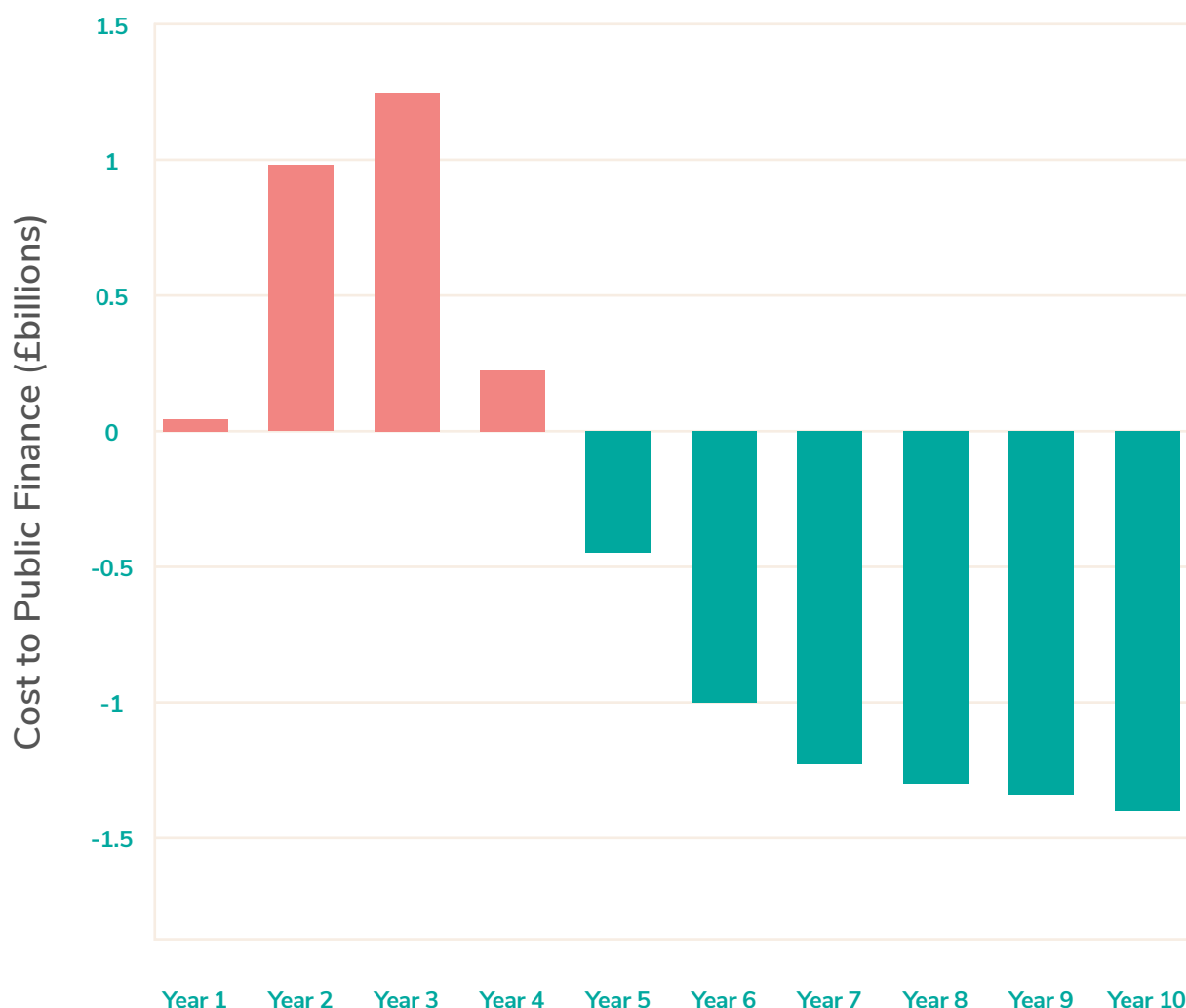
	Years									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Family Help</b>	0	-514	-930	-472	-6	359	507	520	534	549
<b>Care</b>	-9	-124	-58	107	183	221	244	250	258	266
Regional Care Cooperatives	0	-50	-50	31	79	115	135	139	143	148
Fostering Recruitment campaign	-9	8	25	51	70	71	73	74	76	78
Extended Family Support Model	0	-82	-33	33	34	35	36	37	39	40
<b>Alternatives to care</b>	-5	-201	-41	224	297	342	365	388	411	436
SGO & kinship CAO allowance	0	-157	-75	32	92	123	132	141	150	159
Family Network Plans	0	-36	11	138	148	159	170	181	192	203
Legal aid for SGO and CAO carers	0	4	35	66	69	72	75	78	81	85
Statutory kinship leave for SGOs and CAOs	0	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6
Introducing preparation workshops for kinship carers	-5	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-6	-5

	Years									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Care Leaver Missions</b>	-5	-74	-99	-44	-31	-35	-35	-34	-34	-31
Scaling up a family finding program	0	-58	-54	2	-1	-6	-6	-6	-6	-5
Extending Staying Put arrangements	0	0	-7	-16	-17	-17	-17	-18	-18	-18
Extending Staying Close pilots	0	0	-14	-6	13	22	25	27	30	33
Scaling up supported lodging programmes	0	-9	-16	-16	-17	-17	-18	-18	-19	-19
Increasing the setting up home allowance	-4	-4	-5	-5	-6	-7	-8	-8	-9	-10
Care leaver bursary for apprentices	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Extending free prescriptions to care leavers	0	-2	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3
<b>Workforce</b>	-27	-57	-121	-48	10	119	144	166	170	176
Creating a five year ECF	-23	-37	-22	40	94	142	146	151	155	160
Introducing national pay scales	0	0	-79	-79	-79	-31	-15	1	1	1
National rules and regional staff banks	0	-14	-14	-4	-1	4	9	10	10	11
Residential leadership programme	-4	-6	-6	-5	-4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>Child Advocacy</b>	0	-7	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3
<b>Parental Representation</b>	0	-10	-9	-8	-7	-7	-7	-6	-5	-3
<b>Total Impact on Public Finance</b>	-46	-987	-1257	-233	446	1007	1227	1293	1345	1404

\* **Note:** Year one is calculated with the assumption that it begins in 2023-24. If some recommendations are implemented later than presented here, the costs and savings will need to be adjusted to take account of inflation.



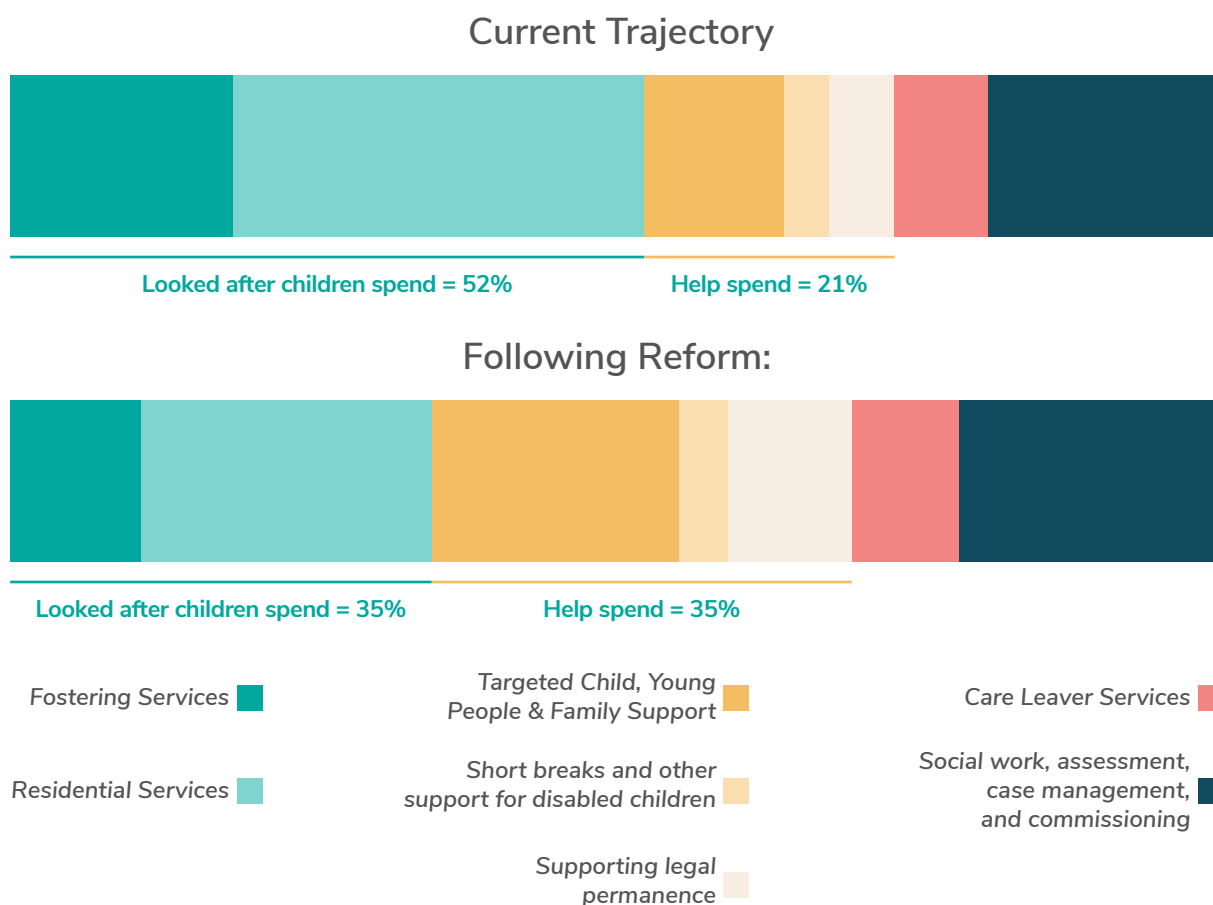
**Figure 4: By bringing forward investment, the reform of children's social care will be cost neutral within 10 years**



The chart above sums up all the monetised costs and savings that are incurred by, or return to, the exchequer in all the models that have undergone the cost benefit analysis (CBA) process. The vast majority of savings return to local authorities (approximately 90%). The chart assumes that additional investment starts in 2023/24, and shows that we would begin to see savings greater than costs in Year five. It assumes no overlap or complementarity between either the costs or benefits of the recommendations that may have an effect on this projection if the package were to be implemented in full.

Bringing investment forward in the way we suggest will result in a rebalancing of spend towards keeping children and families safely together, while ensuring children in care and care leavers receive the high quality services that they need to help them thrive in childhood and into adulthood.

Figure 5: Our reforms will result in a rebalancing of spend toward help and protection



The above chart presents two scenarios. First, it forecasts local authority spend in 2032/33 if the current trajectories of demand and cost continue in the way they have done over the past five years. Second, it shows how our reform plan will have an effect on these spend categories in 2032/33. The chart assumes that additional investment starts in 2023/24 and as above, it assumes no overlap or complementarity between either the costs or benefits of the recommendations that may have an effect on this projection if the package were to be implemented in full. The above bars are scaled to show how the proportion of expenditure across local authority spend categories will change, not how the overall quantum of spend is different in the two scenarios. See earlier in the chapter for more information.

## Implementation governance and support

Sound policy too often falls down at implementation. Evidence suggests that guidelines, policies and information for those implementing a programme are not on their own effective, and that long term multi-level implementation strategies which involve those who have developed the programme on a continuing basis are more effective (Fixsen et al., 2005). Similarly, work by the Institute for Government highlights that, amongst other things, there is a clear need for government to stay close to those who are implementing policies to understand how they are working, and to use ministers to drive progress (Norris et al., 2014).



We therefore make the following recommendations about implementation:

## National governance and delivery

- Oversight of *Relationships Protect* and the implementation of all recommendations in this report should be provided by the Secretary of State for Education. Whilst the whole of government has a role in delivery, the Secretary of State should be responsible for holding others to account and driving progress. The Secretary of State for Education should commit to report annually to parliament on the anniversary of the review's publication, to update on progress against the review's recommendations. The Education Select Committee should routinely review the progress of implementation.
- Government should immediately appoint a lead official to act as Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for these reforms, and an implementation team to drive progress. The implementation team should be multidisciplinary, bringing together the different types of expertise needed to implement reforms, including analytical expertise, implementation experience, practice expertise, and have a regional footprint with leads "on the ground" supporting delivery. The team should be complemented by bringing expertise from outside of the civil service where needed. The programme SRO must have explicit delegation and backing from the Secretary of State for Education and the DfE's Permanent Secretary, to accelerate through processes and controls that would jeopardise delivery.
- Relevant government departments with responsibility for overseeing these reforms should immediately review all activity and policy commitments, to assess whether they are still relevant in light of reform.
- The SRO should report to a National Reform Board for children's social care, bringing together the actors who will need to take action and have a stake in delivering these reforms. This must include those with lived experience of children's social care. Quarterly progress reports on delivery should be made publicly available during the reform programme period.

## Local delivery support and governance

- Government and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) should work together to develop a leadership and support programme for Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) to support delivery of reforms, with a parallel programme for operational change leads within local authorities and lead members. DCSs should be brought together in cohorts to go through the implementation journey and share learning. This will also be a forum to provide challenge on whether enough progress is being made.
- Safeguarding partners should be publishing the details of their collective resourcing to achieve the reform programme objectives and the delegation they are giving to their respective services. The investment proposed above should be used to incentivise greater pooling of budgets across partners: see Chapter Eight.
- Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances (forums that currently exist to support regional local authority improvement) should act as a forum for sharing learning and tracking delivery progress locally, working closely with regional implementation leads.

## 9.5 Alignment with other government policy changes

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A further lesson from the Institute for Government is that policies are never implemented on a blank canvas, and changes in other government policies inevitably impact reforms that were designed at a point in time (Norris et al, 2014). Whilst the review has been developing its recommendations, a review of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) system and major reforms to the schools system have been underway. The introduction of Integrated Care Boards has also been taking shape. Undertaking this work together presents a significant opportunity to set the direction of wider children's services looking across education, SEND and social care (as well as links to health), but if not properly thought through it could be problematic. In implementing the review's reforms, government should consider the full interplay between the different reforms both to ensure strategic alignment and the overall capacity of local authorities and others to engage. Government should set out its version of this plan when it responds fully to the review.

