

# **North Somerset Council**

## **Report to the Council**

**Date of Meeting: 20 April 2021**

**Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting Responsibilities**

**Town or Parish: N/A**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning**

**Key Decision: No**

### **Reason:**

Not an Executive Decision.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the report.

## **1. Summary of the report**

1.1 The report provides members with information on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, its scope and the government's intention to 'radically reform' the system with the intention of improving children's lives.

## **2. Policy**

2.1 Whilst the concept of members viewing themselves as the parents of all children who are looked after came from the Quality Protects initiative launched in 1998 by Frank Dobson, the then Secretary of State for Health, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for 'our' children. This means that they should:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them;
- make sure they have access to services;
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work;
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

## **3. Details**

3.1 The Independent Review of Children's Social Care was launched by the government on January 15 2021 and it was announced that it would be led by Josh MacAlister who was previously the founder of the Frontline programme which provides training for graduates to enter the social work profession.

3.2 The review aims to take a fundamental look at the experiences of the people who matter most, children and young people themselves, and the services they receive through children's social care and partner agencies. It will consider how the provision of services in one part of the system influences a child's experiences and outcomes later. The review will prioritise hearing the voices of children, young people, and adults that have received the help or support of a social worker, or who have been looked after. It will look at the whole system of support, safeguarding, protection and care, and the child's journey into and out of that system, including relevant aspects of preventative services provided as part of early help. This will include children throughout their interaction with children's social care, from referral, child in need and child protection plans, through to becoming looked after.

3.3 The government is aware that the outcomes of all children involved with children's social care are comparably challenging and have highlighted the following:

- children on a child in need plan had an average Attainment 8 score of 23 in 2016, the same as children in care (the national average is 50). The review will focus on what is needed to meet these children's needs, starting with the contribution that children's social care can make to these children's lives – keeping them safe, improving their lifetime outcomes and reducing the impact to children and to society of failing to provide effective support – whilst also considering the role and contribution of the wider multi-agency system. The implications if we are not able to fully support children to achieve their potential are clear:
- children who have been in care comprise 25% of the homeless and 24% of the prison population.
- over a third of care leavers (39%) are not in education, employment or training compared to 13% of all 19-21 year olds and
- just 13% progressed to Higher Education by age 19 compared to 43% of all other pupils.

3.4 The review will investigate how partner agencies roles, responsibilities and accountabilities interact with children's social care and recommend improvements to the way they work together. The influence of related social issues will also be considered, for instance domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance abuse. The government is clear that the review must lead to deliverable reforms that are evidence based, demonstrate a measurable impact and represent good value for money.

3.5 The review will focus on the following themes and questions:

**Support:** what support is needed to meet the needs of children who are referred to or involved with social care, in order to improve outcomes and make a long-term positive difference to individuals and to society?

**Strengthening families:** what can be done so that children are supported to stay safely and thrive with their families, to ensure the exceptional powers that are granted to the state to support and intervene in families are consistently used responsibly, balancing the need to protect children with the right to family life, avoiding the need to enter care?

**Safety:** what can be done so that children who need to be in care get there quickly, and to ensure those children feel safe and are not at risk of significant harm?

**Care:** what is needed for children to have a positive experience of care that prioritises stability, providing an alternative long-term family for children who need it and support for others to return home safely?

**Delivery:** what are the key enablers to implement the review and raise standards across England, such as a strong, stable and resilient workforce, system leadership and partnerships, and what is needed so that this change can be delivered?

**Sustainability:** what is the most sustainable and cost-effective way of delivering services, including high-cost services, who is best placed to deliver them, and how could this be improved so that they are fit for the future?

**Accountability:** what accountability arrangements are necessary to ensure that the state can act appropriately, balancing the need to protect and promote the welfare of 4 children with the importance of parental responsibility, and what is needed to ensure proper oversight of how local areas discharge those responsibilities consistently?

3.6 Josh MacAlister has launch a 'Call for Advice' to help shape the early work of the review and appointed an 'Experts by Experience' Group to advise him on how to include the voices of people with a 'lived experience' of the children's social care system. It is envisaged that the review will consult widely and bring in a broad range of expertise.

3.7 Conclusion:

As corporate parents we should keep ourselves updated and take any opportunities that arise to contribute to this significant piece of work, the recommendations of which will undoubtedly impact on future legislation, funding and our responsibilities.

#### **4. Consultation**

None, this is for information.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

None.

#### **Costs**

None.

#### **Funding**

None.

#### **6. Legal Powers and Implications**

None.

#### **7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

None.

#### **8. Risk Management**

None.

#### **9. Equality Implications**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No.

## **10. Corporate Implications**

None.

## **11. Options Considered**

None.

### **Author:**

Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services

### **Appendices:**

None.

### **Background papers:**

The Review's website:

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/>

Early plans:

[https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRCSC\\_Early-Plans\\_V2.pdf](https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IRCSC_Early-Plans_V2.pdf)

Call for Evidence:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=yXfS-grGoU2187O4s0qC-aGv4cJOe8pAp9ukipZHYJhUMzUyQjczRVcwNjRUMFFDODNRTkdXNklxNi4u>