

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**TUESDAY 19TH JULY 2022**

REPORT TITLE:	NATIONAL CARE REVIEW
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the National Care Review, its findings, implications, and perceived readiness of Children's Services in Wirral to respond.

The 2019 Government Manifesto committed to a review of the children's social care system. The Care Review was launched in March 2021, led by Josh McCallister, with an aim to understand how well the system responds to getting children and young people the support they need. The review prioritised hearing the voices of children, young people and adults that have received the help or support of a social worker, and of those who are care experienced. In May 2022, The Independent Review of Children's Social Care was published.

The report is aligned to priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2026:

- Working for brighter futures for our children, young people and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in Wirral.
- Working for safe and pleasant communities where our residents feel safe, and where they want to live and raise their families.
- Working for happy, active and healthy lives where people are supported, protected and inspired to live independently.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to note the report and scrutinise the response to the National Care Review.

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 For the Children, Young People and Education Committee to exercise its overview and scrutiny function, Members need to be fully informed of significant national and local drivers which impact on service delivery, policy and funding. Understanding The Independent Review of Children's Social Care and its findings will support Members to provide support and challenge to leaders of Children's Services.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Independent Review of Children's Social Care

The government's manifesto 2019 committed to review the children's social care system to make sure children and young people get the support they need. The review launched in March 2021 with the final report being published on the 23rd May 2022. Key findings of the report are outlined below.

3.2 Reset children's social care.

The report calls for a reset in children's social care, pointing to a revolution in the help we offer families experiencing acute stress, where families will get responsive and intensive support from people who will stick with them and have the skills, time and resources to achieve lasting change for children.

3.3 A revolution in Family Help

To reduce the number of handovers between services, the report recommends introducing one category of "Family Help" to replace "targeted early help" and "child in need" work, providing families with much higher levels of meaningful support.

3.4 A just and decisive child protection system

Where concerns about significant harm of a child emerge, it is recommended that an 'Expert Child Protection Practitioner', who is an experienced social worker, should co-work alongside the Family Help Team with responsibility for making key decisions. This co-working will provide an expert second perspective and remove the need for break points and handovers.

3.5 Unlocking the potential of family networks

The report recognises that there are already thousands of grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters who care for their family members. Before decisions are made which place children into the care system, more must be done to bring wider family members and friends into decision making. This should start with a high-quality family group decision making process that invites families to come up with a family led plan to care for the child or children.

3.6 Fixing the broken care market and giving children a voice

Children in care are a priority within the report and it acknowledges that local authorities need help to take back control of this system through establishing new Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs). They will take on responsibility for the creation

and running of all new public sector fostering, residential and secure care in a region, as well as commissioning all not-for-profit and private sector provided care for children as necessary.

3.7 **Five ‘missions’ for care experienced people**

Five ambitious missions are proposed in the review so that care experienced people secure: loving relationships; quality education; a decent home; fulfilling work and good health as the foundations for a good life.

3.8 **Realising the potential of the workforce**

As first priority, the professional development offered to social workers should be vastly improved with training and development which provides progression through a five-year Early Career Framework linked to national pay scales.

3.9 **Implementation**

The Independent Review suggests that all of this should be delivered at pace and with determination through a single five-year reform programme. £2.6 billion of new spending will be required over four years

3.10 **What this means for Children’s Social Care**

Without a dramatic whole system reset, outcomes for children and families will remain stubbornly poor and by this time next decade there will be approaching 100,000 children in care (up from 80,000 today) and a flawed system will cost over £15 billion per year (up from £10 billion now. 1 in 10 children in 2018 had a social worker in the past six years (Department for Education, 2019), and it is estimated that 25% of children will have had a social worker before their 16th birthday (Jay et al., 2020). These children often get a social worker because their parents might be caught in abusive relationships, struggling with their own mental health, or fighting an addiction.

3.11 **The Opportunity this provides Wirral Children’s Services**

Wirral Children’s Services has been innovative in improving and developing its service offer, both for statutory and non-statutory preventative services. The review’s call for Family Help, which combines targeted family support and social care, is an approach already being piloted in the multi-disciplinary Cradle to Career team and Social Worker in Schools project.

3.12 The community-led earliest help provision in Wirral is well-embedded and children, young people and families benefit from a broad range of highly-engaged partnerships across agencies, including targeted programmes such as Drive, We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse, Adder, Family Toolbox and the Early Help Alliance. With the recent successful application for Family Hubs, Wirral’s Children’s Services have a lot of strong foundations on which to build a Family Help response inline with the report recommendations.

3.13 Wirral has embarked on a radical project to open several children’s homes. This project will be a not-for-profit project to enable the best possible outcomes for our children who require care. The first of the four homes offering 4 beds is on track to open in January 2023, with the remaining 12 beds (3 other homes) to open by the end of 2024. This is a very positive step forward for Wirral to provide the tailored support to our children requiring a high level of support.

- 3.14 In addition the Transforming Care programme will provide 3 beds to our young people who have a high level of need due to mental wellbeing. This is an innovative project funded jointly with NHS England, launching from early 2023.
- 3.15 Children's Services and its' partners, facilitated by Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership, are adopting a systemic practice model. The systemic practice model will be implemented with support from the Department for Education and dovetails with the key principles of the independent review- looking at the strengths within families and communities and developing close relationships to build on the resilience and support that is required to bring long standing change and better outcomes.
- 3.16 In gauging our readiness to take the next step in transforming Children's Services, the Senior Leadership Team invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Peer Review of work with children and families. The review took place 17th – 20th May 2022, with the Peer Review Team considering the following key lines of enquiry:
- The quality of support children and families receive from Family Matters (tier 3)
 - The quality of support children and families receive from social work teams (tier 4).
 - The effectiveness of step up and step-down processes
 - The effectiveness and use of assessment tools as part of the assessment/intervention at both levels
- 3.17 The findings of the LGA Peer Review are yet to be published but it is anticipated that they will confirm that Children's Services are ready for the next stage of development in Family Work and will provide recommendations as to next steps.
- 3.18 **Next Steps**
Over the next 12 months, Children's Services will work with partners, stakeholders, children and families, to co-produce a Family Help approach which builds on the existing strengths and meets the requirements of the review and local need. A programme of co-production and implementation will deliver the following key priorities:
- Work with the Senior Leadership Team to have a consistent approach across the directorates.
 - Work with partners to align services
 - Work with staff to co-produce how the social work service and targeted family support services will be delivered
 - Review the offer for foster carers
 - Identify a suite of indicators which will measure outcomes as well as outputs.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. It is anticipated that the Government's response to The Independent Review of Children's Social Care may lead to future changes in funding.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care does not impact on the current legal arrangements, regulations, or legislation.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no relevant risks arising directly from this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 During the course of the national review, members of Children's Services participated in workshops and completing surveys. In November 2021, the Assistant Director Early Help & Prevention co-hosted an event with Josh McCallister to showcase Family Toolbox as a best practice model of delivering Family Help.

8.2 In assessing the readiness of Children's Services to respond to the findings of the review and further develop its Family Help approach a number of engagement activities have taken place, including four workshops with frontline practitioners and Team Leaders/Managers, an Extended Departmental Management Team session, and opportunity scoping with partners across the children's workforce. Further engagement will take place over the coming weeks, with a programme being developed by the Practice and Improvement Team.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. There will be an equality impact assessment undertaken as and when any changes to the provision of Family Help are considered.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environment and climate implications arising from this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising directly from this report, however, to bring about long term sustained change for families, due consideration will be given to community wealth building approaches.

REPORT AUTHOR: Kerry Mehta
Interim Assistant Director – Children and Families
email: Kerrymehta@wirral.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care
<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Not applicable	Not applicable