

26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Agenda Item: 13

## **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE: CASE FOR CHANGE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to brief Committee on The Case for Change published by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and to consider the implications for Nottinghamshire.

#### **Information**

2. In March 2021, an Independent Review of Children's Social Care was initiated, chaired by Josh McAlister, former teacher who founded the social work charity Frontline, which is a fast track, graduate training programme for social workers. The review is broad in scope, considering the whole journey from early help through referral to social care assessment and intervention, both at home and in care through to those who have left care. The review is expected to take 15 months. During the first three months of the review the review team has initiated a call for advice, exploring how the review should work and the questions that it should focus on, as well as a call for evidence. The review team has established an experts by experience board, design group and evidence groups to shape the review approach and findings.
3. The review has published an early "case for change", describing the main challenges the review team has identified in its first three months. The full report and a five page summary are available as Background Papers. The data headlines identified in the report are as follows:
  - there are more children within the social care system now than there were 10 years ago – the biggest increase is children subject to Section 47 enquiries (investigations where a child is suspected of suffering significant harm) which have increased by 129%
  - over one in eight children in care are living in a children's home, secure or semi-independent setting
  - there are increasing numbers of older children in care (increase of 39%) and in need (increase of 36%) over the 10 year period

- nationally there is less spending on children’s services than there was 10 years ago; and a greater proportion is spent on statutory rather than non-statutory services – there are now fewer local early help services to support families early and more money is spent on statutory intervention.

4. The review identifies a range of challenges, including:

- the report identifies that there is a need for further investment in focussed, evidence informed family help. It finds that within social care there is too much emphasis on investigating and assessing, and not enough focus on providing help and support
- the report identifies that social workers are still spending too much time adhering to bureaucratic processes rather than spending time doing direct work with children and families. It identifies the need to do more to recruit, retain and support social care staff
- the report identifies the need to improve the response to teenagers who face harm from outside the home, for example due to criminal or sexual exploitation
- the report identifies that improvements are needed to placements for children in care, both giving a much greater focus on supporting kinship carers so that more children can live with carers that know and love them, and addressing the ‘broken’ placement market
- the report is clear that **“change will not happen without addressing the system causes”**, going on to state that **“there is no situation in the current system where we will not need to spend more – the choice is whether this investment is spent on reform which achieves long term sustainability and better outcomes, or propping up an increasingly expensive and inadequate existing system”** Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review (p.12).

5. The review will now move into its next phase, considering consultation responses to a series of questions posed as part of the case for change, following which it will consider solutions to the challenges identified. As part of this, the Council has expressed an interest in engaging in the consultation process over the summer.

## Local Implications

6. The challenges identified in the case for change are broadly recognised as aligning with the situation in Nottinghamshire. A refreshed transformation programme is currently being scoped which will set out the local actions required to achieve the Council’s ambitions of achieving the best possible outcomes for children and young people by:

- enabling children to experience stability and consistent relationships
- placing a greater emphasis on supporting families in need as well as assessing risk – keeping children safe at home wherever possible by addressing whole family needs through multi-disciplinary working
- where children are in our care, more experiencing living in homes that are family-based and local (kinship or fostering)

- investing in our workforce and enabling them to effectively support children and families.
7. It is proposed that Children and Young People's Committee considers the proposed transformation programme in the autumn.

### **Other Options Considered**

8. There are no options considered; this report is for information.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

9. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care is likely to have significant implications for the delivery of children's services in Nottinghamshire and as such it is critical that Members are sighted on the issues that the Review is raising.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

11. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That Committee:

- 1) considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the issues contained within the report
- 2) agrees to receive a follow up report on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care when the final recommendations have been published
- 3) agrees to consider the proposed transformation programme for children and families at the Children and Young People's Committee meeting in September.

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### **Constitutional Comments (ELP/07/21)**

12. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (LCD 08/07/21)**

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Case for Change: Independent Review of Children's Social Care  
[case-for-change.pdf \(independent-review.uk\)](#)

Youth Summary: Independent Review of Children's Social Care  
[case-for-change-young-people.pdf \(independent-review.uk\)](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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