



Department
for Education

Children's Social Care National Framework

**A government consultation on principles
for practice, expected outcomes and
indicators: statutory guidance**

Launch date 2 February 2023

Respond by 11 May 2023

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About this consultation

Local authority children's social care has the power to transform the lives of children, young people and families. There are countless committed leaders and practitioners involved in providing the highest quality help, protection and care when it is needed, and working with partner agencies to put support in place. However, for too long the sector has struggled to agree on the outcomes that children's social care should achieve, and the best approaches for building strong relationships with families. We are now bringing together, in one place, the purpose of children's social care, principles for practice, and the outcomes that should be achieved. This is so that there is a shared understanding of the expectations for all those who are working to ensure that children, young people and families, whatever their circumstances, can thrive.

We are consulting on the **Children's Social Care National Framework** (National Framework) and the **Children's Social Care Dashboard** (Dashboard) indicators. Together, the National Framework and Dashboard provide clarity on what local authorities should achieve as they meet their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide care for those who need it.

Background information

In May 2022, government committed, as part of its [initial response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#), to work with the sector to develop a National Framework.

In February 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) published *Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation*. The strategy sets out the full government response to recommendations by three independent reviews of children's social care:

- [the Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#)
- the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's [national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson](#) and
- the Competition and Markets Authority's [report into the children's social care market](#)

The Government intends to set greater national direction for children's social care. Central to this ambition, is the introduction of a new National Framework and Dashboard. Since the conclusion of the Care Review, government has established the [National Practice Group](#), who have helped to produce the draft of the National Framework, along with Dashboard indicators. These have now been published, alongside the strategy, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, for consultation.

Following consultation, the National Framework will be issued as statutory guidance for local authorities on their functions for delivering children's social care. Leaders and

practitioners should read it in conjunction with the statutory guidance, [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#), which describes multi-agency responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Government will consult on an update to Working Together in spring 2023. Government will issue the National Framework with a one year implementation period, along with Working Together by the end of the year.

The Dashboard includes indicators that will provide information on what is happening in practice and how the outcomes and enablers described in the National Framework are being achieved. The indicators included in this consultation document are not final and will require significant further development. The Dashboard will be part of the learning infrastructure that helps to improve practice in children's social care. We plan to publish the first Dashboard alongside the National Framework by the end of the year.

Our main aim in publishing this new guidance, the National Framework, along with the Dashboard indicators, is to set national direction for practice that affects children, young people and families. **The National Framework clarifies existing duties; no new duties are added.**

The content of the National Framework builds on, and complements, evidence, best-practice, and broader frameworks, such as the [Supporting Families Outcomes Framework](#).

For families where children and young people have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or where they attend alternative provision (AP), the [SEND and AP Green Paper](#) set out that new national standards will set clear and high expectations for what good looks like in identifying and meeting need, and clarify who is responsible for delivering support from which budgets. As we deliver the SEND and AP Framework, we will align content with the National Framework, and development of Practice Guides, to improve the experiences of children, young people and families.

Who this is for

We would welcome feedback from local authorities who are responsible for delivering children's social care, those who work closely with children's social care, such as safeguarding partners, or other interested parties, such as those who receive services from children's social care.

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 2 February 2023.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team:

- By email: CSCFramework.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

Responding to the consultation

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in September 2023.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request and complete a word document version of the form.

By email

- CSCFramework.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk

By post

Children's Social Care National Framework Team
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Deadline

The consultation closes on 11 May 2023.

Understanding the Children’s Social Care National Framework and Children’s Social Care Dashboard

The Children’s Social Care National Framework (National Framework) has been created to set direction for practice with children, young people and families and is now being published for consultation. The National Framework describes the outcomes that local authorities should achieve for children, young people and families. The National Framework is part of a suite of reforms that the Government has committed to take forward in response to recommendations from the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022) and Child Protection in England (2022) and Competition and Markets Authority, which highlighted the importance of national direction for practice to address unevenness in how support is provided.

The National Framework’s principles for practice and outcomes for children’s social care are informed by legislation and existing statutory guidance, such as the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the Equality Act 2010, as well as evidence of effective ways to work with children, young people and families. The evidence base for these messages has been developed and strengthened over the last decade, through frameworks tested by local authorities and learning from the investment in the [Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme](#), the [Strengthening Families, Protecting Children](#) programme and the [Supporting Families Programme](#). The National Framework draws on, and complements, the existing evidence and a range of literature from across children’s social care, including the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework and the practice principles developed by the [Tackling Child Exploitation \(TCE\) Programme](#), a consortium led by Research in Practice with The Children’s Society and the University of Bedfordshire.

The National Framework has been developed with the advice of the [National Practice Group](#), made up of experts in practice, evidence, lived experience and multi-agency working (see Annex E for the National Practice Group membership). We are now issuing the National Framework for consultation. In due course, we will develop a version of the National Framework for children, young people and families, with their input.

The Children’s Social Care Dashboard

The Children’s Social Care Dashboard (Dashboard) has been created to establish a stronger learning infrastructure and bring transparency to the system so that the impact of what happens in practice can be understood. The Dashboard will eventually be a routine data publication that includes visual presentations of a number of indicators to understand trends and progress towards the outcomes in the National Framework.

Like the National Framework, the purpose and indicators of the Dashboard are presented in this document for consultation. Creating meaningful indicators in children’s social care is challenging, and there are long-standing debates about the best approach. Developing the Dashboard will be an iterative process, and plans for which indicators to use, and how it is published, will evolve in response to this consultation.

Introduction

The Children's Social Care National Framework (National Framework) describes the purpose of local authority children's social care, the principles by which children, young people and families should be supported, and the outcomes that should be achieved so that children and young people can grow up to thrive.

This guidance has been produced for children's social care and includes the outcomes that the National Framework expects local authorities to achieve. However, for children, young people and families to thrive in the long-term, there is a critical role for partner agencies.

Partner agencies have responsibilities to commission and deliver services, work alongside local authority children's social care, and to safeguard children and young people through the practice of their organisations. Whether children and young people are living with their family or family network, are receiving care from the local authority, or have left local authority care, there is a vitally important role for partner agencies who help to provide support to meet individual needs.

This guidance does not describe, in detail, how each partner agency who works with children's social care should meet their duties and contribute to the outcomes of the National Framework. Indeed, the statutory guidance, Working Together already sets out core expectations for how multi-agency working should take place. However, all leaders and practitioners, whatever their organisation, can and should use the National Framework to sharpen their commitment to effective partnership working and strong collaboration that makes a material difference in the lives of children, young people and families.

For those working in services delivered or commissioned by local authority children's social care, the National Framework includes overarching messages for how everyone, from corporate and political leaders, through to Directors of Children's Services, team managers and individual practitioners, should work with children, young people and families. The practice described in the National Framework will require the tenacity and expertise of many kinds of practitioner, including the knowledge and skills of social workers, family support workers, personal advisers, residential children's home workers and multi-disciplinary practitioners with an understanding of harms such as domestic abuse, substance misuse and harms outside of the home.

The National Framework has been produced to help everyone who works in children's social care, whatever their role, to understand the expectations for their work. It has been created so that there is a consistent and clear understanding of what children's social care should achieve, wherever children, young people and families, live and access services.

The National Framework includes:

- the purpose of children’s social care
- the principles that should underpin leadership and practice in children’s social care
- the outcomes that children’s social care should achieve, the enablers that support those outcomes, and how leaders and practitioners should listen to the voices of the children, young people and families they support
- the indicators that will form the Children’s Social Care Dashboard and which will provide information on what is happening in practice and how outcomes are being achieved

What is the status of this guidance?

This guidance applies to all local authorities and is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. It applies to all children up to the age of 18 years whether living with their families, in state care, or living independently, and all care leavers up to the age of 25. This document should be complied with unless exceptional circumstances arise.

This is guidance for how children’s social care is delivered now – this is *not* aspirational guidance setting out what may be delivered in the future for children, young people and families. This is guidance that should immediately inform the day-to-day delivery of children’s social care. Indeed, there are local authorities in England who deliver and commission services in this way already.

The National Framework sets expectations for what should be happening in practice and will be used to inform **conversations between local authorities and the DfE’s regional improvement and support leads**, to help areas to improve and spread learning. It will also inform Ofsted annual engagement meetings and **how areas are inspected**, so that inspection reflects our agreed outcomes for the system.

Who is this publication for?

The National Framework provides clarity about the expectations that government has for children’s social care. It provides **direction for those who work in local authority children’s social care** and sets out how everyone should approach their work with the children, young people and families who need their help. The National Framework should inform how children’s social care is designed and delivered locally and how it is inspected.

The National Framework should be considered alongside legislation and other existing statutory guidance, including Working Together, which sets out the duties on local

authorities and other partner agencies, including education, health, and the police. Working Together describes what agencies must do to meet their duties, including how safeguarding partners must work together to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. The National Framework describes the outcomes that children's social care should achieve whilst meeting their duties, and how they are expected to approach meeting those outcomes.

Local authority leaders and practitioners should use this guidance to:

- understand what is expected of their work with children, young people, and families
- design and deliver support for, and with, children, young people, and families
- strengthen effective and impactful joint working with partner agencies
- reflect and learn, improving practice and outcomes for children, young people, and families

The National Framework is also **a resource for partner agencies who work with children's social care.**

Most children, young people and families who need support should be able to get the help they need outside of children's social care – from their own family and network, or universal and early help services delivered by partner agencies. However, when children, young people and families need help from children's social care, this will also involve the knowledge, skills, and expertise of partner agencies.

This guidance should be a resource to understand how local authorities approach their duties, what they will need from partner agencies, and how local authorities will approach their role in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Partner agencies who work with children's social care should use this guidance to:

- understand how leaders and practitioners from children's social care will approach practice with children, young people and families
- inform their approach to engaging with children's social care, and delivering their own services, to help children, young people and families thrive
- identify where children's social care requires the information, data, knowledge and expertise of their agency, to design and deliver support to children, young people and families
- strengthen effective and impactful partnership working with children's social care and other agencies to better support children, young people and families, including those in the care of the local authority or those who have left local authority care

Finally, the National Framework sets out important **information for children, young people and families to understand what they can expect** as they receive help, protection and care from children's social care.

Whilst not an exhaustive list, the individuals below may find this guidance particularly useful.

Those who work **in** local authorities or children's social care.

- Councillors, including Leaders of Councils and Lead Members for Children's Services
- Directors of Children's Services
- Family hub workers
- Family support and early help workers
- Foster carers
- Heads of Service and Service Managers
- Housing and tenancy officers
- Local Authority Chief Executives
- Local Authority Designated Officers
- Multi-disciplinary practitioners commissioned or employed by the local authority, e.g., public health or domestic abuse practitioners
- Personal advisers
- Providers of care services, including children's homes and fostering agencies
- Regional Adoption Agency leaders
- Residential children's home workers
- Social workers and other staff in adult social care
- Social workers, team managers, independent reviewing officers
- Virtual School Heads

Those who work **with** local authorities and children's social care.

- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- Education and early years, including Multi-Academy Trust leaders, school and college leaders, teachers, Designated Teachers for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, school governors
- Health practitioners, commissioners and providers, including leaders of Integrated Care Boards, named and designated professionals, paediatricians, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors and school nurses, speech and language therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, adult and child mental health workers
- Policing, including officers, support staff, Violence Reduction Units, and Police and Crime Commissioners

- Probation workers
- The judiciary
- Voluntary, community and charity workers
- Youth offending practitioners
- Youth workers

Those receiving services **from** children's social care.

- Children and young people with special educational needs or a disability who receive support from their local authority
- Children, young people and care leavers, who have or have previously had a social worker, family support worker or personal adviser
- Family and friends of children, young people and care leavers who have a social worker, family support worker or personal adviser
- Parents and carers of children, young people and care leavers, including kinship carers and adoptive parents, who have had a social worker, family support worker or personal adviser

Expiry or review date

This document is published in draft for consultation. Following consultation it will be issued as statutory guidance by the end of the year, with a one-year implementation period, to help local authorities to put the National Framework into practice. The National Framework will be issued along with a revised Working Together.

The purpose of children's social care

Children's social care exists to support children, young people and families, to protect children and young people by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that they grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.

This guidance uses the term children's social care to mean the local authority services that exist to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who, without the provision of services, are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly or further impaired, or is disabled (section 17, Children Act 1989)
- provide accommodation to any child in need who requires it (section 20, Children Act 1989)
- provide a range of support to a child who has left care (section 23A, 23B, 23C, Children Act 1989)
- undertake enquiries when there are concerns a child may suffer significant harm and take action to keep them safe, including taking the child into care (section 47, section 31, Children Act 1989)
- act as the corporate parent for looked-after children, care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children) (section 1, Children and Social Work Act 2017)

When delivering services and support to children in care and care leavers, local authorities must take account of the corporate parenting principles (Children and Social Work Act 2017).

Partner agencies hold important and related duties which mean they need to work collaboratively with children's social care as they commission and deliver services that support children and young people to thrive.

- Health, police and housing authorities have a duty to assist a local authority with enquiries where a child may be at risk of significant harm (section 47, Children Act 1989).
- In discharging their functions health, police, schools, probation, youth offending teams and others must have regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (section 10, 11, Children Act 2004).
- Health, police and local authorities have a joint and equal responsibility to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, alongside other partners (section 16E, 16F, Children Act 2004 and section 16E, Children and Social Work Act 2017).

On any given day, local authorities support around:

- 404,310 children in need¹, of which, 50,920 are subject to child protection plans² and 82,170 are children in care³.
- 44,940 care leavers aged 17 – 21⁴. Care leavers aged 22-25 will also be eligible and/or receiving support from local authorities.
- Additionally, there are around 49,680 children in need recorded as having a disability, making up 12% of all children in need⁵. All children with a disability are considered children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, however not all children with disabilities, and their families, will want or need help and support from the local authority.

There are a range of practitioners who work in local authorities to deliver children's social care. Social workers have an important and unique role in supporting children, young people and families who need the help, protection and care of the local authority. Local authorities employed 32,500 full-time equivalent social workers to support children and families on 30 September 2021⁶.

¹ [Characteristics of children in need, Reporting Year 2022](#)

² [Characteristics of children in need, Reporting Year 2022](#)

³ [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2022](#)

⁴ [Characteristics of children in need, Reporting Year 2022](#)

⁵ [Characteristics of children in need, Reporting Year 2022, Table B2](#)

⁶ [Children's social work workforce, Reporting Year 2021](#)

Principles that underpin children's social care practice

Children, young people and families, wherever they live, should be confident that local authority children's social care, and the services that they commission, respect their rights and are delivered with consistency. There are several principles that are cross-cutting and underpin the expectations for practice described in each chapter of the National Framework. They are drawn from, and should be considered in parallel with, legislation and statutory guidance, the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) and the [Seven Features of Practice](#), which identifies features of effective children's social care support for children, young people and families.

- **Children's welfare is paramount, and their wishes and feelings are sought, heard and responded to:** decisions about help, protection and care for children should always be made with the aim of safeguarding and promoting their welfare, and with their best interests in mind (section 22(3), Children Act 1989). The voices of children and young people should be sought and heard at every stage of support, and they should contribute to decisions made about their lives, wherever possible (section 22(4), Children Act 1989). Advocacy, advice and assistance should be available to assist them in any representations they may wish to make to the authority (section 26A, Children Act 1989).
- **Children's social care work in partnership with families:** children, young people and families are heard, and practitioners build strong relationships with families based on respect. They acknowledge strengths within families and recognise that families, and their networks, will often have solutions to their own challenges, and that holding a focus on the whole family is often the best way of improving children's outcomes (Seven Features of Practice).
- **Children are raised by their families, in family networks or in family environments wherever possible:** children's social care recognise that the best place for most children to grow up is in their families, or within the family network (section 17(1)(b) Children Act 1989). Sometimes this will not be safe or possible, and in these situations, efforts are made to support relationships between children and young people with their siblings, family and friends (section 22C, Children Act 1989). When children and young people need care to be provided by the local authority, such care prioritises consistency, stability and lifelong loving relationships with those who are important to children and young people, so that they are supported to thrive.
- **Practice engages partner agencies at every stage of support to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families:** children's social care builds and maintains strong, supportive relationships with other

agencies and disciplines to respond effectively to the needs of children, young people and families in the round (Seven Features of Practice). From strategic and operational leadership to practitioners supporting individual families, children's social care is proactive in seeking and sharing information, knowledge and skills with other agencies. Children's social care champions collaboration and uses strong relationships to improve services.

- **Practice and services are demonstrably poverty-aware and anti-discriminatory:** children's social care and its partners understand and are sensitive to the structural and societal factors, including socio-economic circumstances, race and ethnicity, which can impact children, young people and families' daily lives and experiences of children's social care. Practitioners recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to poverty and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect. Practitioners recognise and respect the individual and protected characteristics of families, including the ways in which these can overlap and intersect, and ensure support reflects their diversity of needs and experiences. Leaders and practitioners use reflective discussions to identify, and respond to, bias and ensure practice is inclusive and anti-discriminatory.

Children's social care outcomes and enablers

The outcomes described in the National Framework are about what children's social care should achieve for the children, young people and families they support. These are outcomes that reflect the core purpose of children's social care, and they are part of a journey towards the sorts of long-term outcomes where children, young people and families can thrive.

Each chapter of the National Framework that follows explains what leaders and practitioners should do to support the children's social care outcomes and enablers, and how they should listen to the voices of children, young people and families, ensuring they shape services and decisions that affect their lives. These expectations are a summary of the practice that is expected to support the outcomes, rather than a definitive list of everything that should happen in children's social care.

There are 4 outcomes that children's social care should achieve for children, young people and families, which will lay the foundations that enable them to thrive:

1. Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
2. Children and young people are supported by their family network
3. Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes
4. Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

There are also 2 system level enablers that help children's social care to achieve these outcomes:

1. The workforce is equipped and effective
2. Leaders drive conditions for effective practice

The role of partner agencies in long-term outcomes

There are, of course, wider and longer-term outcomes that underpin what it means for children, young people and families to thrive. These outcomes are what public services should aspire to, but which no single agency can achieve on their own; everyone has a role to play.

There are specific responsibilities set out in legislation and statutory guidance for health and the police, as statutory safeguarding partners. And, for other agencies, such as education, housing, and the criminal justice system, there are expectations, as set out in a range of guidance, such as Working Together, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) or NHSE's [Safeguarding and Accountability Assurance Framework](#), for how organisations should safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Agencies that support families will each have their own purpose and area of expertise, but should consider helping children, young people and families to thrive a joint

endeavour. As part of this, long-term outcomes that children's social care and its partners should be committed to supporting include:

- good child development
- good education, attendance, progress, attainment and training
- good physical and mental health
- family stability, including housing and financial stability
- family functioning, including strong family relationships and support networks
- preventing and tackling crime

Additional frameworks

Along with guidance, there are other frameworks that have a broader remit than that of children's social care and which help to deliver on wider and long-term outcomes for children, young people and families.

The National Framework builds on, and complements, the [Supporting Families Programme](#), and its outcomes framework, whose focus is on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on driving system change so that every area has joined up, efficient local services, which are able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time. The programme's outcomes framework has been co-designed with local authorities and the sector.

For families where children have special educational needs and disabilities, or where children and young people are in alternative provision, the new SEND and AP national standards will set clear and high expectations for what good looks like in identifying and meeting need and clarify who is responsible for delivering support from which budgets.

Approach to developing the Dashboard

Each chapter of the National Framework lists a small number of possible Dashboard indicators that could be used now to provide information on what is happening in practice and how some of the outcomes are being achieved. These are interim proxies for more outcome-based metrics that government would like to develop for the future.

To understand what matters most, new indicators will need to be developed and tested. This is particularly true when it comes to capturing the voice of children, the quality of practice and the outputs or short-term outcomes that contribute to the outcomes described in the National Framework – suggested areas for future measures are set out in each outcome and enabler chapter below in addition to the proposed indicators that could be used now. **These are published in draft for consultation.** We are unlikely to have the ‘right’ list at this stage and look forward to further engagement with stakeholders to identify the best indicators for inclusion in the Dashboard. Annex C also contains a longer list of indicators that we have considered for reference by those responding to the consultation.

Throughout the National Framework we emphasise the importance of anti-discriminatory practice and we will seek to provide a breakdown of indicators included in the Dashboard by protected characteristics, including disability and race, wherever possible.

How the Department for Education will support learning

In the strategy, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, the Department for Education (DfE) committed to support the sector to create stronger learning loops. Regular learning events will be an opportunity for leaders and practitioners to reflect on what the Dashboard, and other evidence, is telling us about practice in children’s social care. When national issues are identified as part of this process, the DfE will bring together key system actors like Ofsted and Social Work England to consider the regulatory and system blockers raised by local authorities and practitioners and take action to continuously improve the system. The National Practice Group (see Annex E) will also help ensure feedback informs the development of Practice Guides.

Frequency of data collection for the Dashboard

As part of consultation on the National Framework and Dashboard, we are seeking views on how frequently we should collect data and publish refreshed versions of the Dashboard. This has to strike a balance between burdens placed on local authorities, who will need to supply most of the data, and supporting the goal of stronger ‘learning loops’ that help the system improve. We propose that the Dashboard collects and publishes data quarterly and are consulting on whether this is the most appropriate frequency to achieve the aims of the Dashboard.

Learning together using the Dashboard

The Children's Social Care Dashboard brings together a set of local authority level data indicators in a publicly accessible, interactive form. The Dashboard will increase transparency and support local, regional and national learning to help everyone to improve their practice in a way that measurably benefits children, young people and families.

Children's social care is a complex public service where data is not straightforward to interpret. Effective use of the Dashboard therefore relies on everyone applying the following principles to their analysis of data:

- Data is viewed in context because the characteristics of children, young people, families and their relationships, experiences, services, schools and neighbourhoods have been shown to have a large influence on children's social care activity.
- Individual indicators are not looked at in isolation from one another, but in the round, to get a fuller picture of how services are delivering and working towards outcomes for children, young people and families.
- The Dashboard indicators are not a signal about what is best for individual children, young people and families. Ultimately, what is in the best interests of a child or young person may be counter to an indicator collected for the Dashboard.

Acknowledging these complexities, the Dashboard can be used in the following ways:

- For supporting local authority leaders and practitioners to identify what is working well in practice and what could be improved, including through talking to children, young people and families about their feedback on local services.
- For local authority leaders to ask questions about how their practice compares to others, as a basis for self-reflection, peer-challenge and investigation about how their approach to supporting families could be improved.
- For central government and others to discuss, with local authorities, their local practice and needs with the aim of fostering learning and improvement, through:
 - The DfE's regional improvement and support leads who hold regular informal conversations with areas to understand where there are barriers to best practice and broker improvement support to help areas improve..
 - DfE facilitated activities to support strong 'learning loops'

The Dashboard is not intended to measure the performance of local authorities and does not set performance targets. Ofsted are responsible for assessing the performance of children's social care services delivered by local authorities. Ofsted will draw on a range of national and local data when carrying out its work with local authorities. Where the DfE is working with a local authority to help it improve through its interventions and improvement programme, we would expect the Dashboard to provide

a readily available set of meaningful indicators to which all parties involved in the improvement journey can refer.

We will continue to work with local authorities to minimise the data burdens placed on them by central government as far as is possible.

Practice Guides

Alongside the National Framework, the DfE is publishing a series of Practice Guides for children's social care. Practice Guides will set out what is known from current evidence and practice expertise about how best to achieve the outcomes and deliver against the expectations of the National Framework. Where possible, Practice Guides will distil the evidence into key ideas and make recommendations to inform the work of practitioners, foster carers, commissioners and leaders.

Practice guides will draw on available sources of evidence ranging from robust, well-conducted experimental evaluations, systematic reviews, qualitative research and practitioner and service user insight generated through consultation. They will be based on a clear set of evidence standards and set of criteria for assessing the strength of evidence behind different approaches or interventions, and recommendations will be transparent about the evidence that sits behind them.

Leaders and practitioners from the sector are to be involved in the development, dissemination and embedding of the guides. The guides will be updated regularly to reflect the most current research on any given topic.

Summary of National Framework and Dashboard indicators

Purpose: why does children's social care exist?

To help children and families, to protect children by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that children, young people and care leavers grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.

Principles: how should children's social care practise?

- Children's welfare is paramount and their feelings are sought, heard and responded to.
- Children's social care work in partnership with families.
- Children are raised by their families, in family networks or in family environments wherever possible.
- Practice engages partner agencies at every stage of support to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families.
- Practice and services are demonstrably poverty-aware and anti-discriminatory

Outcomes and enablers: what should children's social care achieve?

- **Outcome 1:** children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
- **Outcome 2:** children and young people are supported by their family network
- **Outcome 3:** children and young people are safe in and outside their homes
- **Outcome 4:** children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes
- **Enabler 1:** the workforce is equipped and effective
- **Enabler 2:** leaders drive conditions for effective practice

Indicators: how will children's social care understand progress?

Outcome 1

% of referrals which are repeat referrals

school attendance of children in need

rate of new entrants to care

rate of assessments completed

rate of children in care

Outcome 2

% of section 31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents, and the age of the children in the proceedings

% of children in care living with their family networks

Outcome 3

rate and number of section 47 investigations

rate of section 47 investigations which result in an initial child protection conference

rate of new child protection plans

% of children whose plans were de-escalated and did not present again with unmet needs in 2 years

Outcome 4

% of children in care living in foster care

% of children in care living in residential care

distance of placements from home

stability of placements of children in care

strengths and difficulties questionnaire scores for children in care

progress and attainment in Key Stage results for children in care

% of care leavers in education, employment or training

% of care leavers in higher education

% of care leavers in apprenticeships

% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation

Enabler 1

social worker turnover

agency social worker rates

social worker caseloads

Enabler 2

share of children's social care spend on children in care

turnover of Director of Children's Services and practice leaders

Long-term outcomes, achieved with partner agencies: outcomes that help children, young people and families to thrive

- Good child development
- Good education, attendance, attainment, training and progress
- Good physical and mental health
- Family stability, including housing and financial stability
- Family functioning, including strong family relationships and support networks
- Preventing and tackling crime

Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need

Achieving this outcome in practice

Families sometimes struggle with raising children and young people and can need help to be able to meet their needs. Children's social care wants to see all children, young people and families able to thrive, and offers support in a range of situations to realise this ambition. This might involve support for families where children have special educational needs and disabilities or helping families where there are concerns about the wellbeing or safety of children and young people, so that all children, whatever their circumstances, can have the best possible start in life.

Staying together is about finding ways for children and young people to remain living with their families, wherever it is safe for them to do so. To make this possible, practitioners offer tailored help and support to families, responding to the reasons why children and young people's needs are not being met. This often involves supporting parents, carers, and family networks to increase their capacity to provide loving care to children and young people. For some parents and carers this is about addressing challenges in their own lives, such as mental ill-health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, deprivation and housing instability, through the advice and services of partner agencies. For others, support will focus on developing skills to care for, and support the development of, children and young people, by improving the quality of relationships, introducing consistent routines, and encouraging engagement in education and wider community activities.

Central to this approach is a determination from practitioners to use their knowledge and skills to build strong and compassionate relationships with children, young people, and families so they can know what is happening in their lives and make a difference. Children's social care knows that for some families, difficult circumstances are compounded by structural inequalities such as poor living conditions, poverty and racism. Leaders and practitioners are committed to tackling discrimination, challenging biases and working respectfully with families and partner agencies.

How leaders should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Leaders design services that are ambitious for the best possible outcomes of children, young people and families. As part of this process, leaders listen to children, young people and families to identify the help that would meet their needs and support children and young people to stay safe and living with their families, friends and communities.

- Leaders ensure that the needs of children and young people in a local area are identified through robust data and evidence and there is support, information and advice available to meet their needs.
- Leaders should ensure that the support and interventions provided are based on the best evidence about what is likely to improve outcomes for children.
- Leaders address the needs of different children through the help available in the local area. This includes children that can be overlooked, including vulnerable infants, children with disabilities, young carers, those living with families with no recourse to public funds, and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- Leaders understand how children, young people and families, can face barriers to receiving support due to the stigma about receiving help from children's social care and are proactive in tackling areas of practice that are felt to be stigmatising.
- Leaders ensure barriers to support are identified and addressed for marginalised groups.
- Leaders ensure decisions about access to targeted support are clear and equitable, so that children and young people from different socio-demographic groups experience consistency in the kind of support available. Leaders identify and use social work expertise to inform decisions about how to provide help, protection, and care when it is needed.
- Leaders design services so that when targeted support is not provided to children, young people and families, there are clear routes that help them to access the universal services that will meet their needs.
- Leaders support services to deliver help, which is rooted in communities, so that it is timely, accessible to local children, young people and families and does not feel stigmatising. When support is offered, it is based on individual needs, and where required makes use of specialist help.
- Leaders establish teams of knowledgeable and skilled practitioners who use multi-disciplinary expertise to help children, young people, and families.
- Leaders model excellent partnership working with those in other organisations, building strong relationships in their local area and across area boundaries to establish coherent and consistent support for children, young people and families.
- Leaders understand the importance of education as a protective factor, which helps to keep children and young people safe and able to reach their potential. Leaders establish strong partnerships with education leaders, setting high aspirations for engagement in education and support to address barriers to attendance and attainment.

How practitioners should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Practitioners seek out perspectives of children, young people and families to understand, identify and support their needs so that wherever it is safe, they can stay together.

- Practitioners use research and evidence to inform practice and to provide meaningful and tailored help for children and young people, parents, carers, siblings and family networks so that they can thrive.
- Practitioners are confident to use a broad range of tools and resources, such as chronologies, rich genograms, and support from charities or the local community, to assess the needs of children and young people and to provide them, and their families, with help.
- Practitioners use strengths-based approaches to help children, young people and families, working with them to identify what is working well in their lives and how their strengths could support them in other areas too.
- Practitioners understand that stigma can be a barrier to children, young people and families asking for, and responding to, help that is available. Practitioners adapt their practice to overcome these barriers for individual children, young people and families, taking account of their needs and preferences for how they receive support.
- Practitioners, as part of their support for children, young people and families, mitigate the impact of poverty and stress, providing advice and advocacy that helps families to access financial support, housing, and community resources to meet needs. Practitioners identify and differentiate when families need support due to deprivation and situations where children's needs are not being met by parents and carers due to abuse and neglect.
- Practitioners work confidently and respectfully with children, young people and families from diverse socio-demographic groups, with recognition and respect for different cultural models of parenting. Practitioners address inequalities and challenge discrimination in work with children, young people and families.
- Practitioners build strong relationships with children, young people and families, communicating effectively with children and young people of different ages and abilities and responding to the needs of parents and carers.
- Practitioners understand the importance of education as a protective factor, which helps to keep children and young people safe and able to reach their potential. Practitioners consider how children and young people are engaging in education. They use a range of resources, including, where appropriate, the expertise of Virtual School Heads, Designated Safeguarding Leads or Designated Teachers, working closely with partner agencies to support children and young people's attendance and learning.

How children, young people and families should be listened to in practice

- Every area uses a proactive and systematic approach to listen to the individual and varied voices of children, young people and families from different groups in the local area, to understand their needs, and hold themselves to account for providing respectful, quality services.

- Every area has mechanisms for seeking to understand the hopes and aspirations of children and young people and ensuring this informs individual support and the design of local services.
- Children and young people are supported to share their wishes and feelings freely and independently from the views of parents, carers or other adults in their lives.
- Practice is sophisticated in its understanding that children and young people may not always feel able to freely share their wishes and practitioners consider this when working with them.
- Children and young people's views are incorporated into assessments, plans and decision making wherever possible.
- Practice is adapted to ensure that the perspectives of children, whatever their age or ability, can be heard. This includes consideration of the wishes and feelings of children who are not yet old enough to talk or who, for reasons of disability, cannot communicate verbally or prefer other means of communication.
- Data and evidence are used to reflect on how children, young people and families are responding to the help available and explore, with them, whether it is meeting its objectives.
- Children and young people are offered resources, relationships and activities in their local area, so they are able to develop a sense of community, respect and belonging.

Proposed Dashboard indicators

- % of referrals which are repeat referrals
- school attendance of children in need
- rate of new entrants to care
- rate of assessments completed
- rate of children in care

In the future we will develop additional indicators about what matters most for this outcome, building on existing validated tools wherever possible. These should include indicators that better capture the services children, young people and families and care need, whether they are able to access them, their satisfaction with their experiences and whether services are leading to measurable improvements for the child, young person or family. For example, we will explore developing indicators of whether children, young people and families feel heard or involved in decisions and the rate of reunification of children in care who do not return to care within a certain number of years.

Outcome 2: children and young people are supported by their family network

Achieving this outcome in practice

When families are struggling and need help, there are often wider family relationships, or networks that exist and can provide much-needed support to challenging problems. These relationships can be a source of practical help that allow parents and carers to increase their capacity to meet the needs of their children and young people. In some situations, where it is not safe for children or young people to stay living with their parents, or they are on a journey to be reunified with their parents, kinship care can be an option that keeps children and young people connected to those they know and love. Kinship care can be any situation in which a child is being raised by a friend or family member who is not their parent – it can be temporary or long-term.

Family networks can help parents and carers to address their own needs, but they might need the help of practitioners to make this happen. Children's social care need to consider how to unlock family networks to be a source of support, whenever children and young people need help. This support can enable children and young people to remain living with parents and carers, or able to grow up with lifelong loving relationships, even if they are not living with their family.

How leaders should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Leaders recognise that family support is integral to effective support and protection for children, young people and families. Support is not limited to parents and carers, and where an extended family can play a role in helping keep children and young people in a loving, safe and stable family network, services are available to offer the support needed.
- Leaders design services to include family networks from the earliest opportunity (from the first communication with services) and empower practitioners to work with networks at every stage of support for children, young people and families.
- Leaders ensure meaningful and collaborative work with children, young people and families – such as family group decision making – is in place, and that this work prioritises formal and informal kinship arrangements to avoid children and young people unnecessarily entering care.
- Leaders design services so that clear information and advice is available to families, which helps them to feel empowered to make decisions about how best to care for children and young people in their family networks.
- Leaders design services and use their funding flexibly so that when it is in the child's best interests, members of the family network can access the right support, without needing to become foster carers for children and young people to remain within the family.

How practitioners should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Practitioners identify existing support networks with children, young people and families as early as possible, seeking to understand who they define as their family, and who is important in their lives. This might include non-familial relationships, such as lifelong friends, youth workers, teachers and members of their local community or faith-based organisations.
- Practitioners are alert to working in partnership with family members and support networks that might ordinarily be overlooked as important sources of care and support, giving particular attention to involving fathers of children and young people.
- Practitioners value the insight of family members and support networks, seek out their views and take appropriate action to respond to any concerns they might raise about the support and care that is provided to children and young people.
- Practitioners understand that family members do not operate in isolation and recognise that family networks come in many forms.
- Practitioners take steps to build and strengthen family networks where they are weak and help them to build support systems where they do not yet exist.
- Practitioners are confident to respond to conflict between family members as they build and strengthen family networks, including helping families to manage contact between children, young people, parents, carers and family members.
- Practitioners help family networks to identify options for providing loving relationships, support and stability to children and young people.
- Practitioners help kinship carers access financial and peer support alongside information, advice and training that equips them to meet the needs of their children and young people, and provide them with a loving, safe and stable home.
- Practitioners bring the family network together to explore safe and loving family-led options for the child's care before the local authority issues care proceedings, wherever it is safe and possible to do so.
- Practitioners ensure they conduct proportionate assessments of prospective kinship carers to ensure they can provide a safe and stable home for their kin, and to ensure they receive the help they need to provide short term or long-term care.

How children, young people and families should be listened to in practice

- Children, young people, their families, and networks' views are sought and heard to understand how to design services that support children and young people to

stay living with their families, friends and communities, where safe and in best interests for them to do so.

- Children, young people, and families are supported to identify who in their family network could be a source of support and space is provided to explore, with that network, how they can offer love and stability to children and young people.
- Parent's views are incorporated into plans to keep children safe through their family network, and family networks are encouraged to report how much support they receive.
- Kinship carers and the children and young people they care for, are given the opportunity to share their views and experiences to inform how services are designed and delivered.

Proposed Dashboard indicators

- % of section 31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents, and the age of the children in the proceedings
- % of children in care living with their family networks

In the future we will develop additional indicators about what matters most for this outcome, building on existing validated tools wherever possible. These should include measures of the stability of family network arrangements and numbers of children and young people in kinship care placements. For example, we will explore developing indicators of stability in foster care with family and friends and the percentage of children and supervision orders that do not subsequently return to court within a given number of years.

Outcome 3: children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes

Achieving this outcome in practice

There are some children and young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm unless there is substantial and sustained change to their circumstances. This harm can come from inside or outside the home. Harm can be the result of actions by parents, carers, or other individuals in the family, or a consequence of the context and environment children and young people experience outside of their home, including where children go missing. Any child or young person, whether they live with their family or are cared for by the local authority, can be experiencing harm.

Children's social care has specific responsibilities, with the local safeguarding partners, to make any necessary enquiries where significant harm is suspected and to take swift action to protect children and young people. Protecting children and young people from abuse, neglect and harm is the cornerstone of how, in the long-term, they will thrive.

Children's social care has social workers, along with other practitioners and partner agencies, who are skilled in building strong relationships with families and carers, assessing children and young people's safety and deciding how to protect them. This will involve observing interactions between children, young people and their families or family networks, seeking to understand the capacity of parents and carers to protect them from harm, and listening to their voices. Practitioners will be curious about the daily lives of children and young people and remain alert to the possibility that individuals in their lives may intentionally try to hide their experiences of abuse, neglect and harm.

Children's social care will work tirelessly with families and children's networks, and with partner agencies in the community, to address the reasons why children and young people are experiencing harm. For a minority of children and young people, there are occasions when it is not safe for them to remain living with their families or family networks, and in these situations, children's social care will go to court to make decisions about where they should live.

Expectations for practice related to harm outside of the home draw on multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm, developed by the [Tackling Child Exploitation \(TCE\) Programme](#).

How leaders should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Leaders know how well children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect, and harm in and outside of their homes. Leaders are engaged with practitioners so that they have their 'fingers on the pulse' of practice quality.

- Leaders ensure that where there are concerns about abuse, neglect, and harm, they are investigated robustly and there is decisive and rapid action to keep children and young people safe.
- Leaders organise services so that decisions about what must happen to protect children and young people are led by skilled and experienced practitioners, and that responses protect individuals and address the context in which harm is taking place. Leaders identify and use social work expertise to protect children and young people from harm.
- Leaders support practitioners by creating a culture that is both determined to protect children and young people, and which recognises the challenge of keeping children and young people safe in circumstances where there can be a high degree of uncertainty.
- Leaders encourage a culture of curiosity, learning and reflection, so that the organisation and individuals can improve practice. Leaders do not blame their workforce when there are serious incidents and focus instead on identifying and sharing learning and adapting systems and practice to improve responses to abuse, neglect and harm.
- Leaders put clear information sharing processes in place in their local authority and support safeguarding partners to identify, share and discuss relevant information and data between partner agencies.
- Leaders model strong, compassionate and collaborative relationships in their own organisations and with other agencies, so that where support services are jointly commissioned and delivered, the needs of children and young people experiencing abuse, neglect or harm can be met.
- Leaders recognise the rights of children, young people and families and ensure that intervention in families is proportionate and anti-discriminatory.
- Leaders model an understanding of how discrimination, inequality and exclusion affect children, young people and their families and communities across their own and with other agencies.
- Leaders ensure barriers to support are identified and addressed for marginalised groups.
- Leaders support services to deliver help, which is rooted in communities, so that it is timely, accessible to local children, young people and families and does not feel stigmatising. When support is offered, it is based on individual needs, and where required makes use of specialist help.
- Leaders use the Public Law Outline in an effective and timely manner, ensuring that a case only goes to court when all other child protection options have been explored and where it is in the child's best interest.

Responding to harm outside of the home

- Leaders provide services that put the needs of children and young people first, recognising that many children are perceived, and treated, as older than they are. Leaders understand that the likelihood of harm is more acute for some

groups of children and young people who are more likely to be perceived as adults due to factors such as their ethnicity, sex or lived experience.

- Leaders create strategic responses to harm outside of the home, in partnership with other agencies. Central to this strategic response is a shared understanding, developed with all agencies, that children and young people are, first and foremost, children in need of help and protection. Leaders take account of ethical considerations when developing strategic responses with other agencies, including in how data is shared across organisations.
- Leaders model a strategic commitment to approaching parents, carers and family networks as partners who can protect children and young people, wherever it is safe to do so.
- Leaders understand and address the possibility that these children are blamed for the harm they are experiencing, are criminalised, or have their needs overlooked due to complex circumstances where young people are also involved in instigating harm.
- Leaders ensure services provide information and support to children, young people and families as they address harm outside of the home, so everyone can understand what the processes are, what is happening, why and what the outcomes could be.
- Leaders recognise the importance of collaboration with local communities, civil society, as well as the police and Youth Offending Service to meet the needs of some children and young people. Leaders use these relationships to create safe places for children and young people and ensure that services are streamlined and avoid unnecessary duplication.

How practitioners should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Practitioners understand the distinction between safeguarding, which includes all activity to promote the welfare of children, and child protection, which is focussed on investigation and addressing the significant harm that children might experience. Practitioners make use of local processes to take action that helps to protect children and young people.
- Practitioners are confident to use their knowledge and skills to meet the local authority general duty to provide a range of services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including identifying when a child is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health and development, or faces significant or further impairment to their health and development without the provision of local authority services or is disabled (s.17(10)(a)(b)(c)).
- Practitioners are confident to use their knowledge and skills to meet the local authority responsibility to respond to actual or likely significant harm under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

- Practitioners keep children and young people's needs at the forefront of all decision-making, and build meaningful relationships with children, young people and families to understand their daily lives.
- Practitioners integrate their help and protection roles with confidence and compassion, making good use of their professional authority, clearly conveying their concerns to parents and carers about what needs to change in children and young people's lives.
- Practitioners are confident to build strong relationships with children, young people and families, based on frequent and meaningful direct work. Practitioners communicate effectively with children and young people of different ages and abilities (including those with special education needs and disabilities which affect communication) and responding to the needs of parents and carers. Practitioners take care to identify the strengths within a child or young person's life, and their aspirations for the future, so they are seen as a whole individual, not just as someone experiencing harm.
- Practitioners bring tenacity and unswerving determination to know what is happening to children, asking difficult questions sensitively and respectfully.
- Practitioners use professional curiosity and critical analysis to challenge themselves to consider all relevant evidence to understand and explore the circumstances of a child or young person's life, recognising that how their circumstances appear may not reflect their lived reality. Practitioners remain alert to the possibility that children and young people are experiencing abuse, neglect and harm as a result of actions by parents, carers or other individuals in their lives.
- Practitioners are mindful of differences in identity, context, and culture and how children, young people and families may experience support from children's social care. Practitioners recognise how their own professional beliefs and expectations influence their practice and decision-making. Practitioners understand and challenge discrimination as they build relationships, so that the support they offer can be effective.
- Practitioners engage effectively with other agencies and disciplines, drawing on their expertise and information to enrich assessment and direct work with children, young people, and families, including information to inform their assessments of parent's capacity to safeguard and protect their children's welfare.
- Practitioners ensure sharing of information takes into account ethical considerations and any disproportionality in its use, which may affect minority groups.
- Practitioners seek, share, analyse information proactively and discuss with partner agencies to build a full picture of a child or young person's experiences.
- Practitioners work with other agencies, particularly the police, to make decisions to protect children and young people, which are proportionate and in their best interests. Practitioners commit themselves to ensure that children and young

people do not experience drift and delay in decisions about how to keep them safe.

Responding to harm outside of the home

- Practitioners seek to understand the context in which harm is happening to children and young people, including consideration of coercion, responses to trauma, the impact of neurodiversity and disabilities.
- Practitioners are confident to respond to situations where children and young people are involved in the harm towards others and remember that first and foremost, they are children in need of help and protection. Practitioners remain curious about what is driving their behaviour so as to provide support that meets their needs.
- Practitioners approach parents, carers and the family networks as partners who can protect children and young people, wherever it is safe to do so. They are supported to understand exploitation to have their support needs met in order to strengthen their ability to meet their child's needs within the family and engaged in the solutions and processes to help their children and young people.
- Practitioners consider how children's experiences within their families and networks interplay with the risk of harm outside of the home and identify what needs to change to protect children.
- Practitioners understand and address the risks that individual children and young people are blamed for the harm they are experiencing, are criminalised, or have their needs ignored due to complex circumstances where young people are also involved in instigating harm.
- Practitioners offer children and young people resources, relationships, and activities in their local area so they are able to develop a sense of community, respect and belonging.

How children, young people and families should be listened to in practice

- Children and young people are supported to explore with practitioners the concerns about their safety and wellbeing, including being supported to share their experiences, and share their views on the support that would make a difference in their lives.
- Children and young people are supported and have the opportunity to share how safe they feel, whether that feeling has changed, and why.
- Practice is sophisticated in its understanding that children and young people may not always feel able to freely share their wishes and practitioners consider this when working with children.

- Children and young people are supported to share their wishes and feelings freely and independently from the views of parents, carers, or other adults in their lives.
- Children and young people's views are incorporated into assessments, plans and decision making wherever possible.
- Practice is adapted to ensure that the perspectives of children, whatever their age or ability, can be heard. This includes consideration of the wishes and feelings of children who are not yet old enough to talk or who, for reasons of disability, cannot communicate verbally or prefer other means of communication.
- Parent and carer views are sought to understand the kind of protection they believe the children and young people in their family need. Family networks are listened to so as to understand their perspective on the care being provided by parents and carers, the challenges to providing an appropriate standard of care and the protection that children in their family need.
- Practitioners discuss, with children, young people, parents and carers, important aspects of their identity. They seek to understand, from their perspective, the impact their identity has on their experiences and the support they are provided by services.
- Children, young people and their families, receive regular information the decisions being made about their lives, so they are clear what is happening and why.
- The views of children, young people and their families are considered before a case is taken to court.

Proposed Dashboard indicators

- rate and number of section 47 investigations
- rate of section 47 investigations which result in an initial child protection conference
- rate of new child protection plans
- % of children whose plan was de-escalated and did not present again with unmet needs in 2 years

In the future we will develop additional indicators about what matters most for this outcome building on existing validated tools wherever possible. These should include indicators that capture whether children and young people are listened to, their views considered and whether services are leading to measurable improvements for the child, young person or family. For example, we will explore developing indicators on access to advocacy services and the percentage of pre-proceedings that do not proceed to court and do not return to child protection plans within a given number of years.

Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

Achieving this outcome in practice

For children and young people who cannot remain living with their families or family networks, children's social care provides the care they need. These children, who are looked after by the local authority, need the same love, protection and stability as any other child or young person. Children's social care, as the corporate parent, is responsible for making sure that where they live, and who cares for them, can meet their needs. Practitioners build relationships with children and young people to get to know them and understand their interests and aspirations so that they can fulfil their potential.

Children and young people who cannot live with their birth families often experience barriers in relation to their education, health and their long-term stability, and these barriers persist after they leave care too. As the corporate parent, children's social care should establish a strong ethos of support, helping care leavers to access education, employment and training, good-quality housing, as well as the right support to improve their mental and physical health.

Children in care and care leavers all need adults in their lives who are ambitious for them to reach their potential, and can offer lifelong, loving relationships.

How leaders should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Leaders champion corporate parenting, working with partner agencies to create a culture where everyone is ambitious to be the best 'parent' for children in care and care leavers and to provide the best possible support for them to thrive.
- Leaders direct services so that for any child who cannot live with their family, a stable home is provided that meets their needs for love, care and relationships, safety and wellbeing, and opportunities for the best chance in life – living in a family environment as far as possible.
- Leaders prioritise making sure that children are able to live in a home that meets their needs, and that they are supported to stay in the right place for as long as possible. This includes supporting children and young people to remain at their school, or if this is not possible, making decisions about school places ahead of moving.
- Leaders undertake sufficiency planning and work with other local authorities and partners to jointly invest in care options that meet the future needs of children.
- Leaders ensure they are confident that those providing care to children and young people, such as foster carers, residential children's home workers, semi-

independent accommodation staff and health settings staff have the training, knowledge and skills, to provide loving and supportive care.

- Leaders recognise the rights of children, young people and families and ensure that children's social care upholds those rights, is anti-discriminatory and focuses on creating a culture of removing and reducing stigma.
- Leaders prioritise making sure children in care and care leavers have, and can maintain, lifelong loving relationships with family and friends that go beyond the professionals in their lives. Where these do not exist, leaders ensure services are available to identify and establish support networks.
- Leaders promote reunification with family and family networks for children and young people, wherever it is safe and in their best interests, so as to help them return to a family environment.
- Leaders direct services so that where adoption is the right permanence option, children are found permanent loving families as quickly as possible. Leaders actively remove barriers to children being adopted, including addressing unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring adopters are recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- Leaders build relationships with Integrated Care Boards so that appropriate specialist provision is jointly commissioned and funded for children with complex needs and disabilities who need it.
- Leaders build strong relationships with local health services so that children in care can access the physical and mental health support they need to address adverse experiences.
- Leaders are ambitious for the outcomes of children in their care and champion their support and access to education, training and employment.
- Leaders ensure children in care have access to information, advice and support to share their views on decisions about their care, including through advocacy services.

Support for care leavers

- Leaders ensure that services put young people's voices and needs at the centre of decision making as they transition to adulthood and effective support is wrapped around those leaving care. Leaders direct services so that young people are prepared for the challenges of living independently.
- Leaders support services to strengthen strong, loving relationships for care leavers, with help available to build networks of support with friends and family.
- Leaders build links across the local authority and beyond to create and improve access to employment and training opportunities for care leavers, including in the local authority where possible. They champion ambitious changes to increase the number of care leavers in higher education, further education and apprenticeships. As far as possible, leaders work tirelessly with local partners to remove barriers to these opportunities.

- Leaders support care leavers to live in safe, suitable accommodation, with a wide range of accommodation options available to young people and appropriate levels of support that meet care leavers' individual needs.
- Leaders build links across the local authority and beyond so that care leavers are given priority for social housing. Every effort is made to avoid care leavers becoming homeless. Leaders use strong relationships to ensure joint working between Children's and Housing Services are joined up and able to meet the needs of care leavers. This could include use of rent guarantor schemes to support care leavers to access private rented accommodation. Every effort is made to avoid care leavers becoming homeless.
- Leaders establish strong relationships with health services to support care leavers to be able to access specialist help when they need it. Leaders are determined to use the resources and tools they have available to tackle disparities in the physical and mental-health outcomes of care leavers.

How practitioners should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Practitioners prioritise ensuring that any child or young person who cannot live with their family is provided with a home, and care, which is safe and as close to a loving family environment as possible. Practitioners support children and young people to live as near to their family as possible and to live with, or remain in relationship with, their siblings. For many children and young people, meeting their needs in this way will mean prioritising foster care rather than other residential settings.
- Practitioners work with staff in residential children's homes, and provide support to foster carers and adopters, to help children and young people to maintain relationships with family and their networks.
- Practitioners only consider pursuing deprivation of liberty or placing children in secure homes as a last resort, when it is in their best interests, and when all other alternatives have been exhausted.
- Practitioners help children in care to develop and nurture loving relationships with friends and family throughout their time in care.
- Practitioners prioritise helping children in care access independent visitor schemes, family-finding programmes, advocacy services, peer support and befriending services.
- Practitioners use their knowledge, skills and training to respond to mental health concerns, and can confidently access support from health professionals, so children in care can readily access the specialist support they need from health services.
- Practitioners support adopted children to bond with their adopted parents from the first time they meet and get the support they need, when they need it.

- Practitioners keep a clear and comprehensive record of decisions and life events in children's lives, so that they can access and understand their histories in this way, should they wish to.
- Practitioners work with Virtual School Heads and designated teachers to support children and young people to attend and make progress in their education. Through every phase of education children and young people are supported into education, training and, in the long-term, employment.
- Practitioners start preparing children and young people for adulthood in a supportive manner, involving them at every stage so they can understand their options for where they can live and how they can be financially stable. This includes working with housing, as well as specific support for young people with disabilities transitioning to adult services.
- Practitioners ensure that all children in care are aware of, and know how to use, independent local authority complaints procedures. Staff listen to complaints carefully and learn from them.

Support for care leavers

- Practitioners help care leavers to develop and nurture loving relationships with friends and family, throughout their time in care and beyond. Wherever possible, practitioners help care leavers to make use of family-finding programmes, advocacy services, peer support and befriending services.
- Practitioners support care leavers to access education, employment and training. This could include working with employers and helping care leavers to identify and apply for opportunities, including schemes designed for care leavers, such as those available through the Care Leaver Covenant.
- Practitioners work to ensure that all care leavers live in safe, suitable accommodation. Care leavers are supported to access a range of housing options, including Staying Put, Staying Close (where available) and supported lodgings. This could include use of rent guarantor schemes to support care leavers to access private rented accommodation. Every effort is made to avoid care leavers becoming homeless.
- Practitioners use their knowledge, skills and training to respond to mental health concerns, and support care leavers so they can readily access the specialist support they need from health services.
- Practitioners ensure that all care leavers are aware of, and know how to use, independent local authority complaints procedures. Staff listen to complaints carefully and learn from them.

How children, young people and families should be listened to in practice

- Children and young people are given the opportunity to share their views on any concerns about their safety and wellbeing.
- Children and young people are asked where they want to live and what is important to them in a home, if they cannot remain living with their family or with their family network. These conversations are sensitive to children's identity, culture and background and avoid assumptions about what children might want without talking to them first.
- Children and young people receive regular information the decisions being made about their lives, so they are clear what is happening and why. Decisions are explained clearly and sensitively to children and young people.
- Children and young people are given regular opportunities to share their hopes and aspirations, and this informs individual support and the design of local services.
- Children and young people are given opportunities to be involved in identifying training, development and support needs for foster carers, residential children's home workers and key workers. They are given opportunities to be involved in the programmes that support carers to improve their knowledge and skills to provide better standards of love, care and support.
- Children and young people are supported to articulate their views, including through access to independent advocacy (with specialist services available to support those with communication difficulties), ensuring they know what to do and who to talk to if they are unhappy or when they do not feel listened to. Advocacy services meet the National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services.
- Children and young people are supported to access peer support and befriending or mentoring schemes to amplify their voices.
- Kinship carers, foster carers, adopters and their children are given the opportunity to share their views and experiences to inform how services are designed and delivered.

Proposed Dashboard indicators

- % of children in care living in foster care
- % of children in care living in residential care
- distance of placements from home
- stability of placements of children in care
- strengths and difficulties questionnaire scores for children in care
- progress and attainment in Key Stage results of children in care
- % of care leavers in education, employment or training
- % of care leavers in higher education
- % of care leavers in apprenticeships

- % of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation

In the future we will develop additional indicators about what matters most for this outcome building on existing validated tools wherever possible. This should include indicators that tell us more about children's experiences in care by capturing their voices, the extent they feel listened to and their physical health. To align with the care experience missions, we will explore developing an indicator for loving relationships such as the percentage of children and young people that report having a really good friend and someone they trust and indicators to track ring-fenced employment opportunities for care leavers. We will also develop indicators to align with the adoption strategy.

Enabler 1: the workforce is equipped and effective

Achieving this enabler in practice

There is a wide range of staff and practitioners who make up the children's social care workforce, and each has the opportunity to be invaluable in helping children, young people and families to thrive.

Practitioners who are knowledgeable, skilled and experienced can offer compassionate and motivational support that addresses the seemingly intractable problems facing families. There are unique responsibilities for social workers, as registered professionals, but every local authority will rely on a host of important practitioners, such as family support workers and children's home workers, who will work alongside children, young people and families.

The work they do can be demanding, complex and emotive, which means that leaders at every level of their organisation need to be aligned in their vision to support the workforce to be effective. Team managers have a vital role in providing day to day support and supervision, and across children's social care, service managers, assistant directors, Directors of Children's Services, Chief Executives and corporate and political leaders all have a part to play in resourcing the workforce to help children, young people and families.

How leaders should strive to support this enabler in practice

- Leaders understand the complex realities of frontline practice. They consider their workforce their greatest asset in delivering impactful services, which achieve the outcomes of the National Framework, as part of the long-term ambition for children, young people and families to thrive.
- Leaders encourage the workforce to ensure practice is goal-oriented, capable of making a tangible difference in the lives of children young people and families.
- Leaders prioritise consistency of practitioners for families and support all practitioners, including social workers, family support workers and personal advisers, to spend time with, and build strong and stable relationships with, children, young people and families.
- Leaders have a workforce strategy and commission services and recruit practitioners with the knowledge, skills and experience to deliver the outcomes set out in the National Framework. This includes ensuring a diverse workforce that reflects the cultural, linguistic and religious needs of the communities they serve and investing in practitioner training, development and wellbeing.
- Leaders ensure that unnecessary bureaucracy is identified and removed, including with the help of technology and administrative support, and that practitioners have manageable workloads (which take account of both case numbers and complexity).

- Leaders ensure their practitioners have the knowledge and skills they need to support the children and young people they work with, and ensure that regular, consistent, reflective supervision is provided to practitioners to support their practice, development and wellbeing.
- Leaders ensure that managers at every level of the organisation have manageable spans of control and are able to provide the support and supervision that allow practitioners to work effectively with children, young people and families.
- Leaders promote evidence-based approaches in practice, and ensure work with children, young people and families is purposeful, effective and supports children and young people's wellbeing.
- Leaders support the workforce to value cultural competence and ensure that relationships with children, young people and families is based on anti-discriminatory practice.
- Leaders ensure that early career social workers receive the support and training they need to develop their practice and that they can benefit from the expertise and support of more experienced colleagues.
- Leaders prioritise a stable and permanent workforce and only employ agency social workers when absolutely necessary, and as a temporary measure, so that children, young people and families can maintain consistent relationships with practitioners.

How practitioners should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Practitioners are clear about how their role in children's social care can help to achieve the outcomes set out in the National Framework, and meet the long-term ambition for children, young people and families to thrive.
- Practitioners build strong, respectful relationships with children, young people and families. They are confident and capable to identify their needs and make decisions about what needs to happen to meet their needs, in complex circumstances that can involve significant risk and uncertainty.
- Practitioners take responsibility for communicating effectively with children, young people and families. Practitioners understand the many and complex reasons why children, young people and families may not want to share personal information or acknowledge the changes that are needed to meet children and young people's needs. Practitioners are creative and determined in their approach to building relationships and addressing barriers to strong working relationships.
- Practitioners are committed to ensuring that their practice with children, young people and families is impactful. They are goal-oriented in their work and use research and evidence to ensure support for children, young people and families is purposeful and effective.

- Practitioners communicate effectively with children, young people and families, to understand their perspectives on the support they need, to help them make sense of their experiences and family history and to nurture loving relationships in their lives. This includes adapting practice to consider and respond to the wishes and feelings of children who are not yet old enough to talk or who, for reasons of disability, cannot communicate verbally or prefer other means of communication.
- Practitioners value multi-agency working and build strong relationships with partner agencies and with practitioners from other disciplines, to seek, share, analyse and discuss information, and to provide expert help to children, young people and families.
- Practitioners recognise the rights of children, young people and families, and ensure that their support for families upholds those rights, and accounts for how discrimination, inequality and exclusion can affect how individuals engage with children's social care.
- Practitioners use supervision to reflect on their practice and to prioritise their learning and development, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills and experience needed for their roles.

How children, young people and families should be listened to in practice

- Feedback is used to inform how practitioners build relationships and work in partnership with children, young people and families. At a strategic level, this will include using feedback to inform workforce strategies and the kinds of knowledge, skills and experience that are needed in the local authority's workforce.
- Feedback from children, young people and families is used to identify training, development and support needs for practitioners, and to put this into practice.
- As far as possible, children, young people and families with lived experience of children's social care are included on interview panels for a wide range of practitioners, including social workers, family support workers, personal advisers, and carers. This is to give them the opportunity to influence the kinds of individuals involved in providing services and care and ensure practitioners can demonstrate an understanding of issues facing children, young people and families.

Proposed Dashboard indicators

- social worker turnover
- agency social worker rates
- social worker caseloads

In the future we will develop additional indicators about what matters most for this enabler building on existing validated tools wherever possible. This should include indicators that capture training and development (e.g. social workers completing the Early Career Framework); whether the workforce has access to the information and support from other services that they need; the quality of the children, young people and families' relationships with social workers; and information about the broader workforce who are not social workers. For example, we will explore developing indicators based on existing validated measures of the quality of relationships and their impact.

Enabler 2: leaders drive conditions for effective practice

Achieving this enabler in practice

Children's social care leaders can transform the communities that they work in. For leaders to help their services achieve the outcomes described in the National Framework, and for children, young people and families to thrive, they need to work collaboratively across their own organisation and with other agencies. This requires the passion, commitment, knowledge, skills and expertise of every kind of leader, including political and corporate leaders, practice leaders, principal social workers and team managers.

Leaders at every level should model the practice they expect between practitioners and children, young people and families. They need to use every tool available, whether that is partnerships, the expertise of their workforce, the wisdom and insights of those with lived experience, or data and technology, to set the conditions for practice and to continually improve the services they provide.

How leaders should strive to support this enabler in practice

- Leaders are committed to delivering impactful services and are resolute in providing the conditions for effective practice so that every service they commission and every practitioner in their organisation is able to support children, young people and families to thrive.
- Leaders at every level of the organisation lead by example; they are visible, approachable and have the knowledge, and experience for their role. They model integrity and creativity in their work, and demonstrate clarity of purpose for their teams, organisation and with partner agencies.
- Leaders have a local practice framework and create a shared strategic vision for local services, which they encourage practitioners, commissioned services and partner agencies to use to facilitate a shared understanding of how to approach working with children, young people and families.
- Leaders are tenacious in their approach to meeting the outcomes set out in the National Framework. They model effective advocacy for children, young people and families across their organisation, with partner agencies, and to their own workforce. They continually evaluate how to meet these outcomes and build on the strengths of existing services. Excellent practice is expected and celebrated, and responses to serious incidents are swift and handled with discipline.
- Leaders understand the children, young people and families that live in their area, and design services that will meet their needs, based on the best available evidence of what will improve outcomes.

- Leaders use robust evidence and relevant, timely, data to understand and improve outcomes and practice. They use technology and administrative support to enhance practice, support information sharing and reduce the burdens of bureaucracy for practitioners so they can prioritise spending time building relationships with children, young people and families.
- Leaders prioritise funding and resources that help families early so children and young people can thrive. Funding achieves value for money and is spent on interventions that make a difference to children, young people and families.
- Leaders are transparent and accountable for their performance and the impact of children's social care practice on children, young people and families.
- Leaders understand the importance of quality services and ensure auditing and assurance processes are in place. Where possible these are multi-agency, so as to build a commitment to learning and improvement amongst all partners.
- Leaders hold colleagues at every level of their organisation to account when there are concerns about how aspects of children's social care services are being delivered.
- Leaders value the support of other local authorities in their region and are proactive in contributing to, and learning from, regional improvement.
- Leaders work in their organisation and with partner agencies to ensure the services they run respect the rights of children, young people and families, value diversity and challenge discrimination in practice.
- Leaders build strong relationships with partner agencies and work collaboratively to support practice. Leaders hold partner agencies to account for their contributions to the work of children's social care so as to drive the best outcomes for children, young people and families.

How practitioners should strive to achieve this outcome in practice

- Practitioners share feedback to help leaders to improve the culture in which they practise. They are strong advocates for high standards of practice amongst the workforce and for support for children, young people and families that meet their needs.
- Practitioners provide contextual information and insights to help leaders understand data and identify how to change practice. They amplify the voices and feedback from children, young people and families in respect of services.
- Practitioners confidently raise issues and concerns with leaders to identify improvements needed in how services are being delivered.

How children, young people and families should be listened to in practice

- Ensuring that data that reflects children, young people and family experiences of children's social care are considered when understanding the impact of practice.
- Ensuring the voice of all children, young people and families are heard, regardless of their circumstances, race, culture or other protected characteristics.
- Using feedback from children, young people, families and the local community to shape the culture of children's social care and informs local priorities for change.
- Children, young people and families are empowered to raise issues and there are clear processes to escalate, concerns when practice is not to the standard they deserve.

Proposed Dashboard indicators

- share of children's social care spend on children in care
- turnover of Directors of Children's Services and practice leaders

In the future we will develop additional indicators about what matters most for this enabler building on existing validated tools wherever possible. This should include indicators that capture whether leaders create the environment for services to succeed. For example, we will explore developing an indicator around the percentage of social workers that believe their employer delivers the 8 social worker employer standards (as defined by the Local Government Association's health check).

Consultation questions

The Children's Social Care National Framework (National Framework) has been created to set direction for practice with children, young people and families and is now being published for consultation. The introduction of the National Framework describes the outcomes that local authorities should achieve for children, young people and families in children's social care. The National Framework is part of a suite of reforms that government has committed to take forward in *Stable Homes, Built on Love*: a consultation and implementation strategy for children's social care.

The National Framework describes principles for practice, outcomes and indicators that will help to understand how those outcomes are being achieved. Following consultation, the National Framework will be issued as statutory guidance.

The consultation questions that follow are in relation to the National Framework and Dashboard. There are general questions about the draft document, and some additional questions for each outcome and enabler, covering the expectations for practice and the indicators that will help to understand how they are being achieved.

About you

If you are not responding via the online survey, please can you ensure you provide:

- your name
- relevant contact details
- whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation
- whether you would like your responses to be kept confidential within your response

1. What is your name?

2. What is your email address?

3. In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? As a...

- Child or young person under 18 in care
- Child with a social worker or early help worker
- Care leaver
- Birth parent
- Adoptive parent
- Kinship carer
- Foster carer
- Special Guardian
- Family member of a child who is in care
- Family member of a care leaver
- Director of Children's Services
- Chief Executive of local authority
- Local authority practice leader

- Local authority principal social worker
 - Social worker
 - Social work team manager
 - Family support worker
 - Independent Domestic Violence Adviser
 - Substance misuse worker
 - Charity
 - Residential children's home worker
 - Educational institution (e.g., early years setting, school, college, alternative provision setting, university)
 - Academic
 - Health practitioner
 - Police officer
 - Youth Justice officer
 - Probation officer
 - Other (please state)
4. We know that some individuals will respond on behalf of their organisation.
- a. Are you responding to this consultation on behalf of your organisation?
 - b. What is your organisation?
5. As government analyses the consultation findings and develops and publishes a response, we may want to quote you.
- a. In producing a government response to the National Framework consultation, may we quote your response?
 - b. May we contact you if we have any follow-up questions on your response to this consultation?
6. In processing your data and meeting legal duties, government may be expected to share information about your consultation response.

In line with the privacy notice, would you like your response to be kept confidential?

General National Framework and Dashboard questions:

7. To support local authorities in delivering the outcomes and enablers set out in the National Framework we have sought to make the document user-friendly and easy to understand. We have tried to be concise, use plain language and provide clear explanations of what is required of leaders and practitioners.
- To what extent do you agree that the National Framework is clear and easy to understand?
8. What do you think of the expectations for practice described in the National Framework?
9. The National Framework describes the role of local authority children's social care in achieving outcomes for children, young people and families. Existing statutory guidance, [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#), describes

the expectations for how other agencies, such as education, health and the police, should meet their duties to work with local authorities, and safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It would not be appropriate to duplicate content across both pieces of guidance, but it is important that the National Framework reflects the importance of multi-agency working.

How could the National Framework strengthen the expectations for multi-agency working?

10. The Dashboard is being created to support learning and bring transparency to the system so that the impact of what happens in practice can be understood. It will contain a series of indicators providing information on what is happening in practice and how the outcomes and enablers described in the National Framework are being achieved.

Are there additional ways that we can ensure the Dashboard supports continuous learning and improvement?

11. How often should data be published to support learning and understand how practice is making a difference to children, young people and families?

Outcome, enabler and indicator questions

The following questions are about the outcomes, enablers and indicators set out in the National Framework. Each chapter describes expectations for how leaders and practitioners should practise to achieve outcomes for children, young people and families. There are also expectations around how children, young people and families should be listened to. For each chapter there are a small number of proposed indicators which will form the Dashboard.

In the questions below, we are interested in your thoughts on any other ways that children's social care should work towards the outcomes and what further indicators may be useful to consider.

You are not required to provide additional information if you do not have any further comments.

12. Outcome 1: children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need

- a. Are there any other ways leaders and practitioners should work towards this outcome which are not specified in the National Framework?
- b. Would you recommend any other existing indicators or evidence to support learning around this outcome?

13. Outcome 2: children and young people are supported by their family network

- a. Are there any other ways leaders and practitioners should work towards this outcome which are not specified in the National Framework?

- b. Would you recommend any other existing indicators or evidence to support learning around this outcome?

14. Outcome 3: children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes

- a. Are there any other ways leaders and practitioners should work towards this outcome which are not specified in the National Framework?
- b. Would you recommend any other existing indicators or evidence to support learning around this outcome?

15. Outcome 4: children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

- a. Are there any other ways leaders and practitioners should work towards this outcome which are not specified in the National Framework?
- b. Would you recommend any other existing indicators or evidence to support learning around this outcome?

16. Enabler 1: the workforce is equipped and effective

- a. Are there any other ways leaders and practitioners should work towards this enabler which are not specified in the National Framework?
- b. Would you recommend any other existing indicators or evidence to support learning around this enabler?

17. Enabler 2: leaders drive conditions for effective practice

- a. Are there any other ways leaders and practitioners should work towards this enabler which are not specified in the National Framework?
- b. Would you recommend any other existing indicators or evidence to support learning around this enabler?

Annex A: Glossary

To note, these definitions correspond with those used in Stable Homes, Built on Love: a consultation and implementation strategy for children's social care.

Care Proceedings - When a local authority decide they need to get involved with a family to keep a child safe they may start court proceedings, known as care proceedings

Child in Need – defined under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services, or the child is disabled.

Child in Need plan - CIN plans set out the support to be provided to a Child in Need and their family by children's services.

Child protection - Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Children - Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) Guardian - When working with children in respect of public law legal proceedings, the Cafcass worker is known as a children's guardian. The guardian's most important role is to make sure that local authority arrangements and decisions for and about children protect them, promote their welfare and are in their best interests.

Children's homes - The Care Standards Act 2000 provides that 'an establishment is a children's home... if it provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children'. 'Wholly or mainly' means that most of the people who stay at a home must be children.

Children's Social Care – Children's social care exists to support children, young people and families, to protect children and young people by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that they grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.

Children's Social Care National Framework – Guidance, published for consultation alongside Stable Homes, Built on Love, which describes the principles of practice and the outcomes that children's social care should achieve, for children, young people and families. It includes Children's Social Care Dashboard indicators which will help to understand progress towards the outcomes of the National Framework.

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) - The Competition and Markets Authority is an independent non-ministerial government department, responsible for strengthening business competition and preventing and reducing anti-competitive activities. [Competition and Markets Authority - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Corporate parent - the term used to describe the local authority who has responsibilities to support children in care and care leavers in a way that other children

are supported by their parents. Corporate parenting principles are set out in https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/section/1/enactedSection_1_of_the_Children_and_Social_Work_Act_2017

Early help - In the current system, early help is pre-statutory multi-agency support provided by local authorities and partners to children and families. Early help is often delivered within universal services at lower levels of need

Extra-familial harm - As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation

Integrated Care Board (ICB) - A new type of NHS body that bring the NHS together with partners across their area. Integrated care boards are responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of the population, managing the NHS budget, and arranging for the provision of NHS services in their area.

Kinship care – A broad term which refers to any situation in which a child is being cared for by a friend or family member who is not their parent for a significant amount of time. The arrangement may be temporary or longer term. A working definition is included in chapter four of Stable Homes, Built on Love, and this will be consulted on.

Looked-after child – A child is looked after by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours; are subject to a care order or are subject to a placement order.

Multi-agency working – Work across organisations to meet children’s needs including effective information sharing, joint decision making and co-ordinated interventions.

Multi-disciplinary working – A range of practitioners and professionals from different backgrounds working together to enable the best outcomes for children.

Parent – Our definition of parent (as it relates to the working definition of kinship care in outcome 2 – this is not a legal definition) includes:

- ‘any birth parent, with or without parental responsibility for the child’, ‘Any stepparent, with or without parental responsibility for the child, who is in a subsisting relationship with the birth parent’.
- ‘any adoptive parent who prior to the making of the adoption order in respect of the child was not a ‘friend or family member’ as defined in this Act’.
- ‘any parent by virtue of section 42 or section 43 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, whether or not they have parental responsibility for the child’.

Safeguarding – The broad set of actions that are taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes protecting children from abuse and

maltreatment; preventing harm to children's health or development; ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Section 17 – section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of “children in need” in their area.

Section 20 – Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 sets out when a Local Authority must provide accommodation for a child within their area if that child needs it, due to the child being lost/abandoned or there being no person with parental responsibility for that child.

Section 31 – section 31 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the circumstances in which a court may order that a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm be placed in the care, or under the supervision of a local authority.

Section 47 – Where a child in a local authority's areas is subject to an emergency protection order, is in police custody or maybe suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) local authority social care services must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. This will include multi-agency assessment, and where appropriate multi-agency strategy discussions, planning and review.

Secure children's homes – Secure children's homes are residential homes for vulnerable children aged between 10 and 20. These homes restrict children's liberty in order to ensure their safety. Secure children's homes are run by local authorities, voluntary organisations, or they are privately run.

Working Together – Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It clarifies and builds upon the core legal requirements, making it clear what individuals, organisations and agencies must and should do to keep children safe. It seeks to emphasise that effective safeguarding is achieved by putting children at the centre of the system and by every individual and agency playing their full part.

Annex B: Dashboard indicators

These are the existing indicators suggested in the preceding text for each outcome and indicator. We have drawn on a number of sources to identify potential indicators for inclusion in the Dashboard and are particularly indebted to the outcomes framework developed by La Valle, Hart, Holmes and Pinto in 2019.⁷

Outcome	Indicators
Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need	% of referrals which are repeat referrals School attendance of children in need Rate of new entrants to care Rate of assessments completed Rate of children in care
Children and young people are supported by their family network	% of section 31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents, and the age of the children in the proceedings % of children in care living with their family networks
Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes	Rate and number of section 47 investigations Rate of section 47 investigations which result in an initial child protection conference Rate of new child protection plans % of children whose plan was de-escalated and did not present again with unmet needs in 2 years

⁷ La Valle, Hart, Holmes with Pinto, '[How do we know if children's social care services make a difference? Development of an outcomes framework](#)', 2019

Outcome	Indicators
<p>Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes</p>	<p>% of children in care living in foster care</p> <p>% of children in care living in residential care</p> <p>Distance of placements from home</p> <p>Stability of placements of children in care</p> <p>Strengths and difficulties questionnaire scores for children in care</p> <p>Progress and attainment in Key Stage results of children in care</p> <p>% of care leavers in education, employment or training</p> <p>% of care leavers in higher education</p> <p>% of care leavers in apprenticeships</p> <p>% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation</p>
<p>The workforce is equipped and effective</p>	<p>Social worker turnover</p> <p>Agency social worker rates</p> <p>Social worker caseloads</p>
<p>Leaders drive conditions for effective practice</p>	<p>Share of children's social care spend on children in care</p> <p>Turnover of Directors of Children's Services and practice leaders</p>

Annex C: Long list of existing indicators considered during Dashboard development

This annex lists existing children’s social care data indicators that were considered during the development of the Children’s Social Care Dashboard. The long list is provided to support consultation. (The indicators we are proposing are detailed in Annex B.)

Metric
Background and demographics of those receiving support compared to local population
Number of assessments
Time between assessment and child protection plan
% of children with referrals leading to a child receiving a service
Proportion of referrals which are re-referrals
% of children with referrals leading to no further action
% of re-referrals of children who had not received a service
% of re-referrals of children previously subject to a child in need plan
Exclusion rate of school aged children in need
Absence rate of school aged children in need
Unauthorised absence rate of school aged children in need
Persistent absence rate of school aged children in need
Attainment gap of school aged children in need
Rate of child protection plans
% of section 47 enquiries resulting in child protection plan
% of repeat section 47 enquiries of children previously subject to a child protection plan
% of children with repeat child protection plans
Referrals from each agency source (e.g. police, schools)

Metric
Outcomes of referrals made by different agencies
Background and demographics of those receiving child protection support compared to local population
Number of teenage entrants to care
Rates of children becoming entering care (where not looked after by a family member)
Number of missing episodes of children in care in last 6 months (compared with previous 6 months)
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation in the last 6 months
Proportion of children in care convicted or subject to youth cautions in the previous year
Educational exclusion, attendance and attainment of school aged children in need and children in care
% of 2–4-year-olds in early education in the previous 6 months
% of children with mid-year school changes in the previous 6 months
% of children with more/fewer mid-year school changes in the past 6 months compared with the previous 6 months
Progress individual children make with Key Stage results
Proportion of care leavers in higher education
Proportion of care leavers not in education, employment or training
Change in employment, education or training status of individual care leavers
Agency worker rate
Turnover rate of social workers in the past year
Vacancy rate of social workers in the past year
Average social worker caseload
Sickness absence rate of social workers

Metric
Age, ethnicity and time in service of social workers
Number of staff in different groups (e.g. number of staff per child)
Spend on social work per child in need
Number of inadequate local authorities
Local authority Ofsted rating
Ofsted ratings of care placements in the local authority
Levels of deprivation in the area
Rate of change of deprivation in the area
Ethnicity in the area
Housing costs in the area
Housing category types by age, gender and ethnicity
Base rate of homelessness and unemployment in local area
Geography of local area (e.g. urban, rural)
Average wage in local area compared to national average
Average employment rates in local area compared to national average

Annex D: One page summary of National Framework and Dashboard

Children's Social Care National Framework - one page summary						
<i>Why does the CSC system exist?</i>	Purpose To help children and families, to protect children by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that children, young people and care leavers grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.					
<i>How should CSC practice?</i>	Principles of practice					
	Children's welfare is paramount and their feelings are sought, heard and responded to	Children's social care work in partnership with families	Children are raised by their families, in family networks or in family environments wherever possible	Practice engages partner agencies at every stage of support to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families	Practice and services are demonstrably poverty-aware and anti-discriminatory	
<i>What should CSC achieve?</i>	Outcomes for children and families				System enablers	
	Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need	Children and young people are supported by their family network	Children and young people are safe in and outside their homes	Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes	The workforce is equipped and effective	Leaders drive conditions for effective practice
	Practice guides					
	Proposed dashboard indicators					
<i>How will CSC understand progress?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of referrals which are repeat referrals School attendance of children in need Rate of new entrants to care Rate of assessments completed Rate of children in care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of section 31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents, and the age of the children in the proceedings % of children in care living with their family networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate and number of section 47 investigations Rate of section 47 investigations which result in an initial child protection conference Rate of new child protection plans % of children whose plan was de-escalated and did not present again with unmet needs in 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of children in care living in foster care % of children in care living in residential care Distance of placements from home Stability of placements of children in care Strengths and difficulties questionnaire scores for children in care Progress and attainment in Key Stage results of children in care % of care leavers in education, employment or training % of care leavers in higher education % of care leavers in apprenticeships % of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social worker turnover Agency social worker rates Social worker caseloads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of children's social care spend on children in care Turnover of Directors of Children's Services and practice leaders
<i>Outcomes that help children, young people and families to thrive</i>	Long-term outcomes, achieved with partner agencies					
	Good child development	Good education attendance, attainment, training, and progress	Good physical and mental health	Family stability, including housing and financial stability	Family functioning, including strong family relationships and support networks	Preventing and tackling crime

Annex E: The National Practice Group

The [National Practice Group](#) has been brought together to help to develop the Children's Social Care National Framework.

The group is chaired by Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families.

The current members are:

- Dr Alison Steele, Officer for Child Protection, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Anna Bachoo, Director of Practice, What Works for Early Intervention and Children's Social Care
- Annie Hudson, Chair, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- Colum Conway, Chief Executive, Social Work England
- Donna Molloy, Director of Policy and Practice, What Works for Early Intervention and Children's Social Care
- Jansy Kelly, Deputy Director of Social Care and Regulation Practice, Ofsted
- Lorraine Parker, National Facilitator, Safeguarding Children Reform (police)
- Mags Mulowska, Expert by experience
- Nick Pendry, Deputy Director of Children's Services, Wandsworth
- Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work, Camden
- Richard Gill, Chair, Teaching School Hubs Council
- Rosie Fortune, Expert by experience
- Sal Tariq, Leeds, Director of Strengthening Families Programme
- Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director of Children and Young People, North Yorkshire
- Sue Williams, Programme Director, The Centre for Family Safeguarding Practice, Hertfordshire



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