

Council, 10 February 2016

New regulatory body for social work

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to update the Council on developments following the announcement on 14 January 2016 by Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education that a “new regulatory body for social work” would be set-up.

Decision

The Council is requested to note the report.

Overview

Following the public announcement of the Government’s plans to set-up a new regulatory body for social work, there is little to update the Council on. Our working assumption is that following new legislation a new organisation will be established before May 2020.

Communication

The Executive will ensure that all employees are promptly made aware of any developments.

Fees

No information to date. We have tentatively assumed that the HCPC fees will have to rise to compensate for loss of contributions to our fixed costs. DH has no publically available information on the level of fees under the new regime.

Financial implications

We are undertaking an analysis of the financial impact on the HCPC. In particular, the effect on our current annual income of £30 million by a reduction of eight million pa on our variable, semi-variable and fixed costs.

Legislation

No information to date.

New Regulatory Model

No information to date.

Policy Objective

To date no detail on why the HCPC legislation can’t deliver the new Policy.

Project Management

The HCPC will establish a Project Board. An initial conference call was held on 25 January and the next is scheduled for 25 February.

Risk Register

The Project is classified as a Major Project and a risk registrar will be established by the HCPC.

Standards

We have assumed that the HCPC will be responsible for all of the four central standards of regulation, i.e. SETs, SOPS, CPD and SCPEs until the new regulatory body is in a position to take on responsibility of the complete portfolio.

Timetable

No detailed timetable has been published by the Government. However, we are assuming that the Bill will be put forward for inclusion in the Queen's Speech in the spring of 2016 and the legislation will be enacted no later than May 2020 and the General Election.

Transfer of Regulatory Functions

At this stage the HCPC has assumed to be:

- Register of all Social Workers registered in England with the HCPC
- Open FTP cases
- Conditions
- HEI approved and historic programmes

Set-up costs

We understand that the estimate of the set-costs of the new body are not available from the DH. The Executive have assumed that they will not be funded by the HCPC.

Transaction Costs

The Executive have alerted the DH that it would be inappropriate for the registrants of the HCPC to fund the costs of the new Government policy.

Appendices

- 1) Letter dated 15 January from the Department of Health and the Department for Education
- 2) HCPC response dated 19 January to Letter dated 15 January from the Department of Health and the Department for Education
- 3) Letter dated 20 January from the HCPC to the Professions Standards Authority (PSA)
- 4) Transcript of the speech given Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education on 14 January at Kensington Town Hall entitled "Delivering a revolution in children's social care"

- 5) A report on Children's social a care reform – A vision for change dated January 2016 published by the Department for Education, Ref DFE-00008-2016

Date of paper

1 February 2016



Department of Health

The Department of Health
79 Whitehall
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15 January 2016

Dear Elaine and Mark,

We wanted to make you aware of a set of policies to reform social work that were announced by Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education on Thursday 14th January 2016, that will have an impact on the work of HCPC.

The press release and statement are available on the Gov.uk website (link below)ⁱ.

The Department for Education and the Department of Health believe that children, families and vulnerable adults who need social work support should have access to social workers who are professional, knowledgeable and effective. There are many examples of excellent social work practice, but we also know that practice is not consistently excellent across the country.

Following the reviews by Sir Martin Narey and Professor David Croisdale-Appleby, Ministers at both Departments are planning to take forward an ambitious set of reforms to improve the quality of social work education, training and practice in children's, family and adult's services. We also want social workers to receive the level of professional recognition that exists for other professionals.

As part of these changes, we are proposing to bring forward legislation, when Parliamentary time allows, setting up a new body charged with delivering higher standards in social work training and practice. This will include overseeing the rollout of a new post qualification assessment and accreditation system for children and family social workers as well as delivering national accreditation of statutory functions for social workers in adult social care.

Over time, the intention is for this new body to exercise regulatory functions for social workers, taking over from HCPC. These changes are not in any way a criticism of the work of the HCPC. We note that the Professional Standards Authority rated HCPC as a good regulator in 2014-15.

However, Ministers believe that the current model of regulation is not set up to support the delivery of these changes and that a new approach is needed for social workers. This will require a different model of regulation, one that is specific to this unique and challenging profession. We expect to be in a position to provide you with further detail by the end of the month.

This regulatory model is being taken forward for social workers only and does not represent a broader shift in our approach to the regulation of health and care professions: we have no plans to transfer the powers to regulate any other professions from HCPC.

We are of course conscious that establishing a new body requires detailed and careful planning. We see HCPC as the key stakeholder in helping deliver and implement these

reforms and are committed to working with you over the coming weeks and months to plan a careful transition to our new regulatory model. We hope we can move quickly to agree working arrangements that will enable us to work together so that the interests of your staff are properly considered and that disruption to your business is limited.

Kind regards,



Charley Massey
Director General, Strategy and External
Relations
Department of Health



Paul Kissack
Director General, Children's Services,
Equalities and Communication
Department for Education

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nicky-morgan-unveils-plans-to-transform-childrens-social-work>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-delivering-a-revolution-in-childrens-social-care>

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Chair: Elaine Buckley
Chief Executive and Registrar: Marc Seale

By email to: charlie.massey@dh.gsi.gov.uk

19 January 2015

Dear Charlie

Social work reform

Thank you for your letter of 15 January concerning the Education Secretary's announcement that changes are to be made to the education and training of social workers and that "over time" another body will assume the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) regulatory functions in respect of social workers in England.

We are pleased to note that the proposed change is not a reflection on the HCPC's work. That assurance will be important to our colleagues who have worked so diligently over the past three and half years to set and maintain standards for social workers. In particular, this includes those who were responsible for ensuring that the Frontline programme - which we see the government is keen to expand - was able to meet HCPC's rigorous standards of education and training.

We know from experience that the restructuring or transfer of regulatory functions is not only time-consuming and potentially disruptive, but also creates a degree of uncertainty for both the staff and registrants involved. At this stage it is unclear exactly what is proposed and the impact it is likely to have on the HCPC and the many thousands of our social worker registrants who currently work with children, families and vulnerable adults. Consequently, we hope that the government will be publishing concrete and detailed proposals for change at the earliest opportunity.


You indicate that you should be in a position to provide us with further details about the new model of regulation by the end of the month. We look forward to receiving that information and to working with your colleagues to ensure the successful and timely completion of the proposed reforms.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Buckley
Chair

Marc Seale
Chief Executive and Registrar

Elaine



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Harry Cayton
Chief Executive
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Chair: Elaine Buckley
Chief Executive and Registrar: Marc Seale

20 January 2016

Dear Harry

As you are aware the Secretary of State for Education announced last Thursday the intention to transfer the powers to regulate social workers in England from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) to a new body.

The Council of the HCPC was meeting last week for a two day strategic review. Following the announcement they expressed concern that by implication some of our stakeholders may incorrectly conclude that the HCPC was not delivering efficient and effective regulation.

Since that the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) is currently undertaking your annual review of the HCPC the Council would like to explicitly seek reassurance from the PSA that the HCPC continues, within the framework of the Standards of Good Regulation to deliver efficient and effective regulation. Additionally the Council would like confirmation from the Authority that the model of statutory regulation that we use is appropriate to ensure public protection in relation to the professions we regulate.

If you have any questions or points of clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Rejals
Marc*

Marc Seale
Chief Executive and Registrar



Speech

Delivering a revolution in children's social care

From: Department for Education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>) and The Rt Hon **Nicky Morgan MP** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/nicky-morgan>)

Delivered on: 14 January 2016 (Original script, may differ from delivered version)

Location: Kensington Town Hall, London

First published: 14 January 2016

Part of: Children's social workers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/children-s-social-workers>) and Looked-after children and adoption (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/looked-after-children-and-adoption>)

Nicky Morgan sets out plans to transform children's social work so that social workers get it right for vulnerable children and families.



Thank you Andrew [Christie, Director of Children's Services for the Tri-borough, who will shortly be Children's Services Commissioner in Birmingham] for that kind introduction. It is a pleasure to be here in Kensington and Chelsea - one of our most innovative local authorities.

I am delighted that you'll be joining us as one of our partners in practice, and I look forward to my department working very closely with you over the coming years to achieve something truly remarkable.

Social workers change lives. They have the ability not just to improve the circumstances of vulnerable children but to change them, and therefore their futures, entirely.

That is why supporting social workers, and giving them the tools they need, is a priority for this government and a personal priority for me as Secretary of State.

In my role as Education Secretary I often say that everyone has an opinion on education. Each one of us went to school and the majority of us have at least one family member or friend who is a teacher. From my own family I get plenty of advice!

Yet most of us have never had any real engagement with social services. We've never been through the care system and we've never seen first-hand those heart wrenching situations social workers see on a daily basis.

The importance of social work

Social workers are, indeed, our country's unsung heroes. There can be no doubt that social work is

one of the most demanding professions in the world.

It is a difficult, often thankless task where the stakes are high, and the credit is low.

So let me first say a heartfelt thank you to the thousands of social workers supporting our most vulnerable children and families, day in and day out. I've heard about cases like:

- a 15-year-old boy, repeatedly abused by an older man, who eventually made a full disclosure to the police with the specialist support of a social worker
- the foster carers at breaking point, thinking they may have to give up the care of 2 brothers, who with the support of highly skilled social workers developed the skills and confidence to carry on

And we have outstanding practitioners like Isabelle Trowler, the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/isabelle-trowler>), who has been working tirelessly with government for the past 2 years.

And experts like Sir Martin Narey and Alan Wood, who have been asked to lead reviews on children's residential care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childrens-residential-care-review-to-transform-lives>) and multi-agency working.

And of course, Edward Timpson (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/edward-timpson>), from my own ministerial team, who has been passionately championing this agenda for years, and who sadly cannot be here today because his mother Alex passed away last week after a long illness.

The Timpson family have fostered around 90 children over the years, as well as adopting two boys. They are a shining example of the selfless love and support that is so desperately needed by the children we serve.

The challenge ahead

While there can be no doubt that we have many deeply committed and truly inspirational social workers, we don't have excellent children's social services everywhere.

And we know that when there are mistakes, or when people aren't given the support they need - the consequences can be heart-breaking. Cases like Baby Peter Connelly, Daniel Pelka or Hamzah Khan.

Cases which show that this work can literally be a matter of life and death.

As the Prime Minister has made clear, we must give every child the best start in life and make sure that every child can fulfil their potential - regardless of the circumstances they were born into.

And we must make sure our support for the most vulnerable is at the heart of that commitment.

Reforming the system

We have a huge task at hand:

- last year, over 630,000 children were referred to children's social care

- over 400,000 children were in need of support, with a significant proportion of these children having suffered abuse or neglect
- and we now know more about challenges like online grooming, child sexual exploitation and child trafficking - all abhorrent crimes

Eileen Munro's 2011 landmark review of child protection

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/munro-review-of-child-protection-final-report-a-child-centred-system>) showed that politicians in the past had created a system that was too often concerned with the process of social work rather than its outcomes; one which left social workers confused and demoralised and prevented them doing what they do best - changing the lives of children and families. We inherited a system where:

- practitioners have been made to follow rigid processes instead of being allowed to do 'what works'
- an overwhelming weight of bureaucratic burden, where the need to tick boxes, degraded professional autonomy and distorted our focus on what vulnerable children needed
- inflexible working meant children's needs were not always at the centre of decision making

Progress has been made

Over the course of the last Parliament we made significant moves towards reforming the children's social care system.

Colleagues in the Home Office, local government and in my own department have worked hard to address the challenges we have faced.

We have made real progress in stripping back bureaucracy, securing crucial additional support for children in care, and reforming adoption.

Recent announcements - such as our plans to intervene more decisively in failing authorities, Alan Wood's review of local safeguarding children boards, and the Narey review of residential care will take this forward.

And today I am announcing that we will invest more in adoption services and change the law to make sure adoption is always pursued where it is in a child's best interest, so no child misses out on a loving and stable home.

But I also recognise that successive governments have neglected this area.

Because children's social care doesn't have the same 'universal appeal' as schools or hospitals.

And because it serves some of society's most disempowered people, who don't have the same sharp elbows - clamouring for more to be done.

I stand here today to tell you - we have not yet done enough.

That is why one of my first priorities on returning to my role in May was to revolutionise children's social work.

In fact, only this week, the Prime Minister said that he believed our reforms to child protection would

be the 'landmark reforms of the next 5 years'.

It is time to inject the same ambition we injected into our education system, into children's social care.

That same intolerance of failure, that same passion for high standards. It is time to say 'ok' is not good enough for these children, and that where there is failure - we can no longer sit by and watch.

As a country we should feel ashamed that more than 20 local authorities today are failing, and some have been doing so for years.

That is why I want to make a serious of commitments over the next 5 years:

- to make sure children's social care is led by the best, and that we give those excellent leaders the freedom to innovate
- to get the best and brightest graduates into the profession, and to make sure they have the training they need
- to strip back the red tape that stifles innovation; and instead, introduce a system of checks and balances that holds the system to account in the right way
- and as the Prime Minister pledged just a few weeks ago - to intervene in any local authority found to be failing, and where this failure is persistent or systemic, take services away

My department will set out over the coming months exactly how we plan to achieve this from the front door of children's social care right through to services for care leavers, and everything in between.

Getting the best social work workforce possible

Just as we know that we can't have great schools without great teachers - our child protection system needs excellent people at its heart. It is on the shoulders of social workers that the success of the system rests.

Just 5 years ago, social workers had no clear statement of the knowledge and skills they needed to work effectively with children.

Under the old system there were literally hundreds of pages of guidance.

Social workers do not need that kind of prescription, but they do need to know what is expected of them and what professional standard they need to meet.

Put simply, we needed to establish the core knowledge and skills every practitioner needed to do their job well.

That is why, just over a year ago, at the NCAS Conference

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-announces-childrens-social-work-reforms>), I

announced that we would set out new social work knowledge and skills statements at three levels

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work>)

- front line practitioner, practice supervisor and practice leader.

Thanks to this government, social workers now have that clarity for the first time ever.

Working with Isabelle Trowler, a frontline practitioner and expert in her field, we have developed the clearest statements ever on the skills and knowledge social workers need.

But it is not enough just to state what is expected. We need to now use these statements to assess and accredit social workers so we can have confidence in every frontline practitioner.

There are currently over 20 local authorities across the country trialling this, involving over 1,000 social workers, and I have been delighted by the enthusiasm with which local authorities have come forward to help us.

I want every children's social worker to have accredited status.

That's why I am delighted to be able to announce today that we will be rolling out this programme nationwide so that children's social workers across the country, at every level, will be fully assessed and accredited by 2020.

Improving leadership

Strong leadership is also vital to our reforms.

Just as teachers deserve the support of great headteachers, I want the next generation of social workers to have excellent leadership. Someone with experience who knows what it's like to make tough decisions; balance complex workloads and still stay grounded.

That is why we are putting in place a system of assessment and accreditation for practice leaders as well as for front line practitioners and supervisors.

And this year we will have our first cohort of talented social workers training to become the country's future leaders in social work. These expert and experienced social workers will make sure we have the pipeline of talent we need throughout the workforce.

Improving the quality of entrants to social work

I also want to see the best people becoming social workers.

Schemes like Teach First (<https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/>) have helped transform teaching into one of the most prestigious and high status professions in the country, and we must now do the same for social work.

Frontline (<http://www.thefrontline.org.uk/>) mirrors that approach by attracting the brightest and the best graduates into social work - giving them fast-track, top quality training in children's social work.

It's no surprise then that there are more than 10 applicants for every place on a Frontline course, and 9 applicants per place for the Step Up to Social Work programme (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/step-up-to-social-work-information-for-applicants>). The majority of local authorities now benefit from these schemes.

Don't just take it from me. Take it from the local authorities working with these programmes, who have told us the quality of students is consistently very high.

That's why I want to see an extra 750 qualified social workers coming from fast-track programmes in the next year alone, and why I can announce today we will be investing a further £100 million into Frontline, and into our specialist course - Step Up.

Step Up will make 550 places available next year and Frontline will expand to the North East of England.

We'll also be extending our Teaching Partnerships scheme - building stronger links between universities and employers, so trainees can be confident they are getting the skills they will need in the job.

Setting the right standards for social work

But I also want us to be confident that every new social worker joining the workforce has received high quality initial training, whether that's through new graduate entry routes or through the more traditional undergraduate courses.

I want that to be true of every newly qualified social worker, whether they go on to specialise in children's or adult's services.

Not enough of the courses available in higher education are currently good enough, as Sir Martin Narey's review told us.

Whilst some courses are excellent, too many don't give trainees the skills and knowledge they need.

This lets down social work trainees, and moreover, it lets down the children they are working to support.

That's why we need a new approach to the regulation of social work which makes sure only the best courses are available.

And so I am delighted to announce today that in partnership with the Secretary of State for Health, it is our intention to set up a new body charged with driving up standards in social work and raising the status of social workers.

The new body will have a relentless focus on raising the quality of social work education, training and practice in both children's and adults' services.

It will set standards for training as well as overseeing the roll out of the new assessment and accreditation system for children and family social workers. This will happen as soon as possible.

And let me be clear, we don't need more quangos, or more bureaucracy - we need a body that will genuinely uphold rigorous professional standards.

More innovation and support

It is clear we have an ambitious programme ahead that will deliver a truly first class workforce in social work.

But our problems are not just within the social work profession.

The system we expect social workers to work in does not create conditions for excellence and innovation.

Even when they have all the requisite knowledge and skills, social workers are still constrained by a system that doesn't give them the freedom to innovate and excel.

So, as well as transforming the social work profession, we need working environments that support excellent practice and development, overseen by outstanding leaders.

This ambition is already being supported by investments of £100 million through our Innovation Programme (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/edward-timpson-speaks-about-innovation-in-childrens-services--2#innovation-programme>).

This is funding projects such as the Right Home project in Calderdale (<https://calderdale.gov.uk/socialcare/family/children-incare/right-home.html>), which offers young people at the edge of care a single person to go to when they need help, and a range of supported housing accommodation when they cannot live at home, including a respite children's home, boarding school accommodation, and support for young people leaving residential care.

But projects like this are only the beginning - we need to go further.

This is why we will establish an independent What Works Centre (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network>), with up to £20 million of additional funding, working alongside the new regulatory body and the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families.

The What Works Centre will be an evidence based resource to support social work practice like never before.

Its mission will be to bring together everything we learn from practice at home and abroad, including our own Innovation Programme, cutting edge practice in local authorities, and evidence from serious case reviews.

This centre will make sure social workers get the support they need - so they can learn lessons from the past and make sure they have access to the best research in the world.

And it is also why we are committed to ensuring that the very best leaders and practitioners are given the freedom to push boundaries; that outdated regulations, laws, guidance and processes do not stand in the way of the best local leaders innovating in the best interests of children and families.

That is the spirit behind our Innovation Programme, and also behind our new push to develop Partners in Practice.

The Partners in Practice programme represents an exciting new partnership with the country's best performing local leaders.

Together they are redefining what a children's services department looks like, with the only design principle being what works for children.

We announced 6 of these partner authorities in December and I am delighted to announce a second wave today with the additions of Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Islington.

These local authorities will provide a blueprint for excellence that the whole system will be able to learn from.

In social work children's lives are at stake.

Our reforms are big and bold because we need the best people on the front line, armed with the knowledge and skills to change lives.

I stand before you today to say to all those social workers out there: I fully support you.

This government wants to invest in your profession and enable you to bring about the change I know you so desperately want to see.

Until we hear children and families consistently say, 'We got what we really needed' - none of us should stop trying to make this system better.

These reforms are about getting it right for social workers so that social workers can get it right for children and families.

Because we owe it to them to get it right.

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- Share on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fspeeches%2Fnicky-morgan-delivering-a-revolution-in-childrens-social-care&text=Delivering%20a%20revolution%20in%20children%E2%80%99s%20social%20care>)



Department
for Education

Children's social care reform

A vision for change

January 2016

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Vision

Children's social care is about changing lives. It has the ability not just to improve the circumstances of vulnerable children but to transform them completely.

We want every child in the country, whatever their background, whatever their age, whatever their ethnicity or gender, to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Children's social care services have an essential role to play – whether by keeping children safe from harm, finding the best possible care when children cannot live at home, or creating the conditions that enable children to thrive and achieve. To make that happen, it is essential that everybody working within children's social care has the knowledge and skills to do their jobs well, and the organisational leadership and culture to support and challenge them to keep improving.

Over the last five years, we have begun to lay solid foundations for the improvements required. We have made significant progress towards reforming the child protection system, stripping back bureaucracy and reforming adoption, as well as securing crucial additional support for children in care and those leaving care. We have also started the process of creating a culture which prioritises excellent practice, based around the principles of innovation and excellence, supported by our £100m Innovation Programme.

Building on that work, we have a real opportunity over the next five years to truly transform the quality of children's social care services in England. This government is fully committed to making sure that is what we achieve for the children and families who need our help. Over the last 6 months, the cross-government taskforce on child protection has been working on a comprehensive new reform programme for children's social care, and this document outlines the vision and principles which underpin those reforms.

Our reform programme

Our ambition for this Parliament is radically to reform the children's social care system, putting practice excellence and achieving more for the children we serve at its heart. Reforms will be structured around three areas:

- First, **people and leadership** – bringing the best people into the profession, and giving them the right knowledge and skills for the incredibly challenging but hugely rewarding work we expect them to do, and developing leaders equipped to nurture practice excellence.
- Second, **practice and systems** – creating the right environment for excellent practice and innovation to flourish.
- Third, **governance and accountability** – making sure that what we are doing is working, using data to show us strengths and weaknesses in the system, and developing innovative new organisational models with the potential to radically improve services.

This document outlines our overarching reform vision across these areas, and acts as a precursor to our full children's social care strategy, which will be published in the coming months.

People and leadership

The best children's social care services in England deliver truly excellent services to children and families. The crucial ingredient of this success is a highly skilled and expert children's social care workforce. Making change happen for children and families is a task which draws on the skills and expertise of a range of professionals – residential care workers, family support workers, professionals within the police, health and education. It is only through rigorously training, developing and supporting workers across these professions that we can truly achieve the change we need to for children.

The profession which bears the heaviest burden of responsibility is children's social work. Child and family social workers hold the statutory responsibility for keeping children safe, and making the right decisions about their futures. That is why ensuring the highest possible standards for this profession is our first priority. In excellent children's social care services, the professional judgement of social workers is deeply respected, frequently sought and can always be trusted. Social workers know how to effect change within families, but also know when success cannot be achieved and they must pursue a stable and secure alternative family future for them. They know how to help young people rebuild their social world and leave the care system brave, hopeful and equipped for the adult world.

This work is not easy. Not everyone can do it and no-one can do it alone. All social workers need to be provided with excellent, frequent and relevant practice supervision by people who have a solid depth of practice knowledge and skill, and who can work through complex planning and decision making about children and families with their social workers and all relevant partners.

Every local area needs a senior social work Practice Leader who holds full responsibility for day-to-day operations and what happens to children and their families. The strongest Practice Leaders in England are in daily touch with the detail of practice on the front line. They identify problems early on, believe that something can be done about them, and have the professional and technical experience to know how to make positive change happen.

Until recently, we have not been sufficiently clear or robust about what a social worker needs to know and be able to do. We know thanks to the reports of Sir Martin Narey (2014)¹ and David Croisdale-Appleby (2014)² that initial social work education is not consistent in adequately preparing trainee social workers for the highly skilled task ahead of them. We have already moved to establish new, incontrovertibly clear statements of the necessary knowledge and skills for children's social work, but now we need to embed these through a reformed system for creating and maintaining rigorously high standards of professional excellence. We also need to continue to bring the best and brightest people into social work, and to innovate as to how these people are supported to develop the skills they need.

Furthermore, too often in the past reform of social work education and training has been solely focused on the initial and generic qualification of social workers. This is not sufficient to bring the social work profession to its full potential. We need instead an end-to-end practice-focused national career pathway which develops talent from practitioner to Practice Leader.

To deliver this change we must:

- Bring the best and brightest into social work and give them the training and development they need to succeed at this highly complex work. We will expand the Frontline and Step Up programmes to bring more excellent practitioners in via work based graduate training, and we will expand Teaching Partnerships between universities and employers to ensure students are properly prepared for the social work task.
- Set the highest professional standards for social work, and hold people to them. The Knowledge and Skills Statements published by the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families provide the standards, and we will roll out a national system of assessment and accreditation to guarantee the practice skill of every practitioner, at every level of seniority.
- Create and implement a coherent and rigorous career pathway for social workers, to take professionals through from practitioner to practice supervisor to practice leader, ensuring professionals have the necessary specialist knowledge and skills at every stage. This will provide social workers with a way to develop their careers whilst keeping practice excellence and innovation at the centre of their work.
- Invest in developing leadership talent, so we have a healthy pipeline of new

¹ [Making the education of social workers consistently effective, February 2014](#)

² [Re-visioning social work education: an independent review, February 2014](#)

practice leaders. We will identify the most able individuals who wish to be future Practice Leaders and prepare them for one of the biggest challenges in public service through a new talent programme.

- To help implement these reforms, set up a new regulatory body for social work – with a relentless focus on raising the quality of social work, education, training and practice in both children’s and adult’s social work.

Practice and systems

No system can be better than the workforce operating within it. But whilst the changes set out above are essential, they will not alone deliver the radical reform. A system can either harness the talents of those working in it, or stifle them. Too often, the social care system has stifled them. Professor Munro’s review (2011)³ described a system in which the actions of social workers had become driven by a pressure to comply with process. This burden of process accumulated over many years and was generally well intended, often responding to specific child protection failings. But by the time Professor Munro began her work, she found a system which was “doing things right rather than doing the right thing”.

We need a system which frees up excellent front line social workers and their leaders to focus on the needs of children and families. There will, of course, need to be clear frameworks and laws in which to operate, as for all effective public services. But, just as in schools the government is working to free up the best teachers and school leaders to take new approaches to education, so we need the future shape of children’s social care in England to be defined not by Whitehall, but by the very best professionals and leaders using the very best evidence. We need to make sure that children’s social care services are places where excellent social work is nurtured and the talents of social workers are harnessed to the full.

To deliver this change we must:

- Ensure central government plays its correct role. It is essential that the government, with Parliament, sets out a clear regulatory framework for an effective social care system. But it must not over-reach its role and dictate practice which is best developed locally by front line professionals. That means further rolling back unnecessary regulations and guidance, as was done in the last Parliament when statutory guidance on child protection was reduced by 700 pages and distorting statutory timescales were removed. It means asking rigorous questions about which elements of our work with children and families genuinely add value, and which do not.
- Give permission and support to innovators. There have always been bold local leaders willing to do things differently – for example in North Yorkshire, where a radical new approach to supporting adolescents in care has been developed. But we see far less genuine innovation in children’s social care than in comparable services,

³ [Collection: Munro review reports, October 2010 to May 2012](#)

with most areas feeling unable to take measured risks in the interests of children for fear of falling foul of prescribed approaches. This must change. We have made a strong start with our £100m Innovation Programme – but need to go further and drive a fundamental cultural shift.

- Demonstrate for the whole system what can be achieved for children when a social care service is at its very best. We need to back the best, most innovative local areas to show us what they are capable of achieving when they are given the freedom to design practice around an uncompromising focus on what children and families need. We will work with the best areas through our Partners in Practice programme to show the way.
- Learn when things go wrong. The system is still too often characterised by repeating the same mistakes. We need a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of why mistakes occur and how the system can learn to avoid them. This requires overhauling the serious case review process.
- Learn from 'What Works'. In the best public services, expert practitioners are supported by authoritative 'What Works' centres. In health we have the National Institute for Clinical Excellence; in schools we have the Education Endowment Fund. We need to establish a similarly authoritative body for children's social care.

Governance and accountability

Finally, we must ensure that these reforms are driven forward by dynamic children's social care organisations, designed with practice excellence and innovation at their heart. These organisations must be well governed and held intelligently to account. We need the highest performing organisations to spread their influence, supporting others to improve. We need failing organisations to be turned around quickly. We need better, more meaningful use of data, to sharpen organisational improvement. We need to ensure that 'checks and balances', including inspection, are proportionate and support high-quality and innovative practice. And we need effective coordination between social care and other services, including the police and health.

Some areas of children's social care – such as foster care and residential care – have long been served by a diverse range of organisations. But core social work functions have remained the preserve of 'in house' local authority teams. At their best these services are excellent: some of the most effective and innovative work in children's social care takes place in well-led local authority services, with a clear model of practice and a consistently strong workforce. Historically, there have been too few opportunities for these local authority services to spread their influence to other areas or support improvement elsewhere. But there have also been too few examples of excellence: too many local authority services are not good enough, with over 60% currently 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement'.

In the last few years, the organisational and geographical landscape of children's social care has begun to change. We have seen the emergence of new 'combined authority' models – with local authorities joining together to provide social care across larger areas; and the emergence of new not-for-profit organisations, established by local authorities to deliver social care functions at arm's length. For the people who have driven forward these innovations, operating outside of the local authority context provides an opportunity

to innovate and create an organisation with absolute clarity of purpose and vision, rather than the children's social care department being one small cog within a much bigger and more diverse corporate context.

These changes have been driven by local authorities themselves, with the government playing a supporting role – changing legislation to allow not-for-profit organisations to run child protection functions; and supporting individual areas through our Innovation Programme. Government has also used its interventions in failing areas to support these trends – helping to broker arrangements between good and poor authorities and, in extreme cases, establishing new independent social care trusts away from council control when the traditional model has persistently failed.

Alongside dynamic organisations with a singular vision for children, effective local coordination and accountability is critical. Too often serious case reviews show a continued failure to work together across different local agencies, and Local Safeguarding Children Boards are not currently driving sufficient improvement. We need to find a better way.

Therefore to deliver this change we must:

- Work with the best local authorities – including those areas which are part of the Partners in Practice programme – to streamline 'checks and balances', ensuring sharper and more focused accountability, as well as exploring the potential for making better use of data to drive performance.
- Support new collective arrangements between local authorities for commissioning or delivering excellent services. We are already working with most authorities to establish Regional Adoption Agencies to drive improved practice and greater scale. In the same spirit, we will support combined models across other elements of children's social care, including through 'city deals'.
- Support the emergence of new not-for-profit children's social care organisations as part of a more dynamic and diverse range of provision. Through our Innovation Programme we will support those local authorities who wish to establish organisations, mutuals and trusts covering all, or part, of their children's social care functions, working with children's charities to explore the scope for their involvement.
- Intervene strongly in cases of failure. Where local services are 'inadequate' we will intervene to secure rapid improvement. We will identify opportunities for the best local services to take over the poorest. In cases of systemic or persistent failure we will create new independent trusts.
- Continue to work with Ofsted to ensure that, in the spirit of changes implemented following the Munro Review, any new inspection framework strongly supports innovation and evidence-based social work practice; and review and improve local arrangements for coordination and accountability, including the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Where do we want to be by 2020?

By 2020, we need to ensure that every local children's social care service across this country has a workforce – on the front line, in leadership positions and in between – with the knowledge and skill to do this highly challenging work. This needs to be verified through robust assessment and accreditation. The social work qualification must have credibility and mean professionals are equipped to work with the highest levels of social complexity, dealing with the highest levels of risk, and striving for the highest standards of practice excellence.

The future we want to see is one where these excellent professionals do not shape their practice to comply with the diktat of Ministers, or guidance from Whitehall officials, or even the Ofsted framework – but rather they form a confident social work profession, constantly pushing the boundaries and redefining what works through rigorous and evidence-based practice.

To support this innovation and drive for excellence, by 2020 we want to see a more diverse range of children's social care organisations, operating over new geographical areas, supported by meaningful data and an inspection regime that supports high-quality evidence-based front line practice, with local arrangements that best support coordination across agencies. And crucially, the performance of these new organisations must be driven by challenging, sharp and practice-focused accountability.

Our most vulnerable children and their families deserve nothing less.



Department
for Education

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