Moving Forward in Family Justice - 4th April

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National Initiatives in Family Justice

- **LIFT** uses an integrated infant mental health and social work approach to improve the quality of permanent placement decisions. It involves a 10 week assessment .In the event that treatment is recommended a Professionals Meeting is held to agree a bespoke treatment plan for the birth parents with a view to presenting that plan to the court. Started in Croydon in October 2015. There is £3.4 million from National Institute of Health research and £1 million from DfE for 2015/16.
- **NSPCC** is undertaking research and evaluation in 25 of its service areas related to abuse and neglect to determine the interventions that have a positive impact on children's lives. Some of these evaluations are large and complex, involving randomised controlled trials, others are smaller, using qualitative research. The resulting evidence base will inform social worker practice and a number of the projects are now complete and ready to be shared such as the impact of the "Taking Care" framework which can be used when deciding and planning to reunite a child with their birth family.
- **Between September 2013 and March 2015, EIF** worked closely with 20 ‘pioneering early intervention places’ across England. This led to the development of a number of tools including:
  - A benchmarking tool which gives local authorities a more accurate assessment of how well they are delivering key outcomes
  - Early Intervention Maturity Matrices – a self-assessment tool for local agencies to assess the quality of their early intervention delivery
  - A methodology for calculating spending on late intervention by local agencies or individual local authorities, which is then used to inform local strategy and expenditure decisions

DfE Innovation Funding

- **Triborough (London) (£4m)** to help them completely redesign how they deliver children's social care from top to bottom, so that professionals can spend more time with children and families and so that practice is rooted in greater expertise and evidence. Islington Council (£2.97m) to transform their children's social care service so that workers spend more time with families and are provided with regular training, supervision and feedback. Evaluators will be embedded into social work teams to 'measure what matters' enabling real-time improvement in performance.
- **Achieving for Children (£1.1 m)** to develop a new approach to supporting adolescents in, and on the edge of, care across the two boroughs of Richmond and Kingston. This will draw together specialist fostering placements, a children's home and a family intervention team using a new, consistent training programme 'Better by Design' across all of these elements
- **Ealing Council (£3.5m)** to implement a new 'intensive engagement model' to transform their social care system for adolescents – with a strong focus on radically expanding and reshaping their fostering service.
- **Enfield Borough Council (£2.06m)** – to set up a Family Accommodation and Support Hub (open seven days a week until 10 pm) to work intensively with young people identified as at risk of entering care to avoid escalation.
- **St Christopher's Fellowship (£1.19m)** to develop a flexible, high-supervision model of accommodation in London for looked-after girls at risk of sexual exploitation, gang membership and substance misuse who might otherwise be placed in secure children's homes on welfare grounds.

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DfE Innovation Funding

- **The North London Children's Efficiency Programme (£374k)** to use a short term (12 week) residential setting to provide intensive therapeutic support to young people coming into care across five London boroughs. This type of regional collaboration/commissioning could lead to a regional placements team and a more sustainable service.
- **NSPCC (£1m)** to introduce the New Orleans intervention model in South London. The model aims to transform delivery and joint commissioning in children's social work and CAMHS teams in relation to children aged 0 to 5 years who are in foster care due to maltreatment.
- **Pause – (£4.2m)** to extend a successful pilot programme from Hackney in 7 local authority areas, which provides therapeutic, behavioural and practical interventions to women who have had multiple children taken into care following repeat pregnancies, helping them to turn their lives around.
- **Newcastle** to support more families to stay safely together and to improve their journey when they need help from Children's Social Care. "Family Insights" creates new social work units that focus on families with similar needs and characteristics; "needs based segmenting".
- **In 2008 the Reclaiming Social Work model was implemented in Hackney** and elements of this have seen been adopted by a significant number of councils in England. It involves arranging into small units or 'pods', each of which is led by a consultant social worker who is the case holder,

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The Challenges

- **How can the LFJB and LSCB's support the PLO improvement programme required?**

- **How can the northern powerhouse and devolution opportunities encourage innovation and change?**

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- **Settlement conferences.** A linked development is the proposed use of settlement conferences as the operational model in Devon. This builds on the experience of using this model in British Columbia, where a 95% success rate has been reported. Settlement conferences can take a number of forms, including:
  - A pre-court round table meeting, judge-led, in both public and private law cases, including parties and individuals who will play a key part in a child's future. The aim is to negotiate a child-centred way forward to avoid a trial or adversarial court process. Where this cannot be achieved, a trial or court hearing will be scheduled with a different judge presiding.
  - An in-court round table meeting with the same aims.

So far, about 40 settlement conferences have been held in Liverpool by the Designated Family Judge (DFJ) and a District Judge (DJ), and a smaller number (10-15) in Devon, with the DFJ there and a DJ. Settlements have been reached in the vast majority of cases.

- **Cash limited budgets.** Agreement with three Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services of local authorities in Devon. The status of this pilot within the family justice reform agenda is that Ministers have given an initial favourable indication about moving to a managed family justice service using a cash limited budgeting framework, where local and national priorities are set in a co-ordinated way.

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- **A further proposal by the DFJ in Liverpool** to develop a model in public law where by a judge and a children's guardian carry out a 'mutual evaluation' of a local authority's case, pre-proceedings, and seek a consent order out of court to avoid a court hearing. The consent order, which for example could be for a Special Guardianship Order or a Supervision Order, would be decided by the judge either at a settlement conference or via boxwork. Contested adoptions or trials of fact would be handled in the normal way through the court application going forward within the Public Law Outline (PLO) framework.

- **Cafcass Plus is pre-Court work** that Cafcass is undertaking in order to manage the rise in care proceedings and reduce Care Case durations should the case progress to further proceedings once the baby is born. Upon notification, the case will be allocated to an FCA, the FCA will meet with both the Local Authority (LA) and the parents, and file a report with the LA. The scheme is now running in the Lincolnshire, Derbyshire (County only at the moment) and Nottinghamshire Teams.

National IRO/Cafcass Developments

- **The Cafcass and Independent Reviewing Officer Good Practice Protocol** was launched in January 2014. It aims to clearly define the statutory roles and effective liaison between Cafcass staff and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).
- **Between June and September 2015 parallel national surveys of FCA's and IROs were undertaken**. The survey had three aims:
- To obtain the views of Cafcass staff and IROs about the protocol;
- To identify further ways of improving joint practice between Cafcass staff and IROs;
- To identify examples of good practice from both Cafcass staff and IROs.

Key findings:

- Both surveys received a good level of responses.
- Respondents were positive about the protocol, reporting that it helped them to understand the statutory roles and interface between Cafcass staff and IROs.
- Opportunity for further good practice development for the life of the case.
- IROs reported that relevant documents, such as the minutes of Looked after Reviews were not submitted with the bundle of LA documents;
- Escalation processes were still felt to require further work.
- There was inequity in access to training with 75% of Cafcass staff having attended a joint training event, with 25% of IROs reporting that they had done the same.
- IROs felt that a barrier to the view of the IRO being heard and received in proceedings was a lack of understanding within the court about their role. In relation to this, they also believed that in comparison to Cafcass staff and the local authority social worker, a lack of weight was attached to their views in court.

National IRO/Cafcass Developments

Next Steps:

- Discussions between the Cafcass Senior Operational Management and IRO Managers Network Vice Chair confirm the commitment to continue working in partnership and building on the progress and improvements resulting from the national joint protocol and work going on at regional and local level.
- We are recommending the establishment of a number of task and finish work streams as part of a joint project group to:-
  - **Review and revise the joint protocol informed by the learning from the surveys.**
  - **Develop a joint modular training programme which can be delivered as a mixed package through e-learning modules and local workshops**
  - **Develop practice guidance on what makes "outstanding" joint work between IRO's and Cafcass based on examples provided through the surveys.**

Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2015

Chapter 3: Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

The LSCB should work with the Local Family Justice Board. In order to support this the LFJB has:-

- **Established a PLO sub-group** with representation for all Northumberland and North Durham DFJ area Local Authorities, Cafcass, HMCTS and Judiciary.
- **Encouraged LSCB's** to adopt the national Family Justice Board Key Performance Measures for s31 care cases and hold agencies to account for unnecessary delay in delivering the Public Law Outline
- **Undertaken exercises** with Cafcass, Local Authorities and HMCTS representatives on the use of experts and urgent ICO applications.
- **Supported the "Moving Forward in Family Justice' event** on 4th April 2016.
- **Supported the Dispute Resolution / Support Pathway** information sessions arranged in March and April 2016.