

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 03/11/2025

Subject: Update on the National Children's Social Care Reforms and Transformation Agenda

Report author: Sarah Sanderson, Operational Director – Children and Young People's Services

Responsible Director: Jacqui McShannon, Executive Director – People Services

SUMMARY

The Children's Social Care Reforms announced by Department for Education in November/December 2024 is a whole-system national transformation initiative aimed at improving integrated working to safeguard children and young people, with the expectation that local authorities start to implement changes from April 2025. This report sets out H&F's position/response to the reforms and plans for transformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee notes the content of this report.
-

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	Further strengthening our family help and child protection services by enhancing consistency, and aligning support to promote even better outcomes for children and families at the earliest opportunity.
Creating a compassionate council	Embedding family led decision making in children's social care helps children and young people by supporting whole families and their networks. Practitioners work in partnership with parents and carers to address difficulties that families face and are committed to keeping children and young people within their family, wherever it is safe to do so.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Family, child, young person and community voice and co-design is a central component of the Families First Programme.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Focus on early intervention, prevention and diversion to prevent families escalating through

	the children's social care system wherever possible.
Taking pride in H&F	Enhancing our offer of support to families and promoting better outcomes.

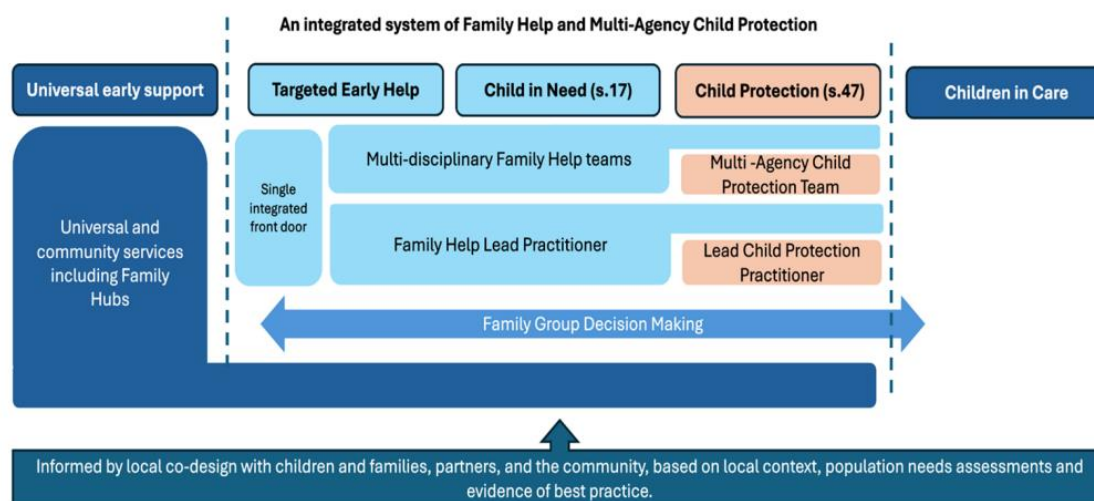
Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Context

- The Children's Social Care Reforms announced by the DfE in November/December 2024 build on the National Framework for Children's Social Care and its implementation will require whole-system transformation, including:
 - Merging targeted early help and section 17 into a single offer of support, with flexibility on who leads
 - Establishing multi-agency child protection teams (MACPT) and lead child protection practitioners
 - Strengthening the role of Education in safeguarding arrangements and introducing new oversight of home education
 - Improving data sharing
 - Enhancing our Kinship Local Offer and establishing Staying Close schemes.

Locally designed systems that meet the needs of the population with effective, integrated and joined up services with partners



- In H&F, Children's Social Care has a well embedded practice model, stable workforce, strong leadership and significant existing strengths across our early intervention, safeguarding and care system. This is well evidenced in our 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement (March 2024) and the sustainment of performance against a range of key indicators. We are committed to maintaining these strengths which reflect the key reform principles: relational and strengths-based practice, child and family-centred support, timely and proportionate intervention, and respect for diversity and lived experience. The

reform agenda is being harnessed as an opportunity to further develop and enhance practice and service delivery, whilst simultaneously learning from the experiences and growing evidence base from Pathfinder authorities.

H&F Transformation Programme

3. In June 2025, local authorities were asked to submit a delivery plan to the DfE which sets out plans and progress towards implementing the reforms. In H&F, our reform programme is centred around four workstreams underpinned by family, workforce and multi-agency voice:
 - Single Child and Family (CAF) Assessment
 - Adolescent Family Help Team
 - Integrated Front Door
 - Join-up with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners
4. In addition, we are working to further broaden and develop our existing approaches to family led decision making and parental advocacy, as well as reviewing our Kinship Strategy against the National Kinship Care Strategy (2024) and leading on the subregional fostering recruitment innovation.
5. The single assessment is already being implemented across Early Help and statutory social work services and work on the other workstreams has commenced which, going forward, will be overseen by the newly recruited Transformation Lead.
6. Given that adolescents are the biggest cohort of need, our local Families First programme will initially focus on this group. The Adolescent Family Help team is in development and will bring together, in an incremental way, a small team of Family Practitioners, social workers, and specialist adolescent leads, to respond to need through the spectrum of targeted early intervention, the assessment process and beyond. Adolescent Development training will also be delivered to the wider workforce across Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), adolescent expertise will be embedded at the Front Door, and join-up with partner agencies supporting adolescents is in progress.
7. In H&F, leaders across CYPS and Education are actively engaged in the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) programme of support whereby iterative learning from the two London based Pathfinder programmes is shared, as well as broader practice and design across London. This is supporting the careful and considered approach to reform planning.
8. Partner agencies have been involved in local and regional planning; given the London context and wider pressures, we are working through the complexities together with the aim of establishing a consistent approach to implementing the reforms across the region.

Governance

9. A multi-agency steering group has been established to oversee the reforms and transformation programme in H&F. This meets monthly and membership includes health, education, police, social care and voluntary sector organisations, and is chaired by the Operational Director – Children and Young People's Services. The group reports into the Children's Health,

Education and Social Care Board (Co-Chaired by the Executive Director for People) and the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (under the Exec Group – Police, Health and Local Authority).

Finance

10. Additional funding for these reforms will be provided through a new Children's Services Prevention Grant, with H&F due to receive £900,474 in 2025/26, as well as an additional one-off grant of £127,742 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It is expected that a proportion of the funding will be spent on transformation activity with the remainder spent on service delivery, alongside the Children and Families Grant.

LIST OF APPENDICES

None