

Response ID ANON-3XZA-3MAZ-1

Submitted to Children's Social Care National Framework and Dashboard
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Privacy Notice

Introduction

1 What is your name?

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3 In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Other (please state)

If 'Other', or you want to provide more details, please state below:
London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) (RIIA) on behalf of The Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS)

4 We know that some individuals will respond on behalf of their organisation.

Yes

Organisation:
London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) (RIIA)

5 As government analyses the consultation findings and develops and publishes a response, we may want to quote you.

Yes, by organisation

Yes

6 In processing your data and meeting legal duties, government may be expected to share information about your consultation response.

Please explain why you wish 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.

Agree

8 What do you think of the expectations for practice described in the National Framework?

Please provide your thoughts on the expectations in the Framework:

ADCS has provided a national response which is in accordance with views expressed by London DCSs and Practice Leaders. Our consultation response seeks to build upon the ADCS position from a London perspective.

The expectations for practice are welcomed. These need to go beyond the description of local authority services and provide greater expectations on all partners. It is important that the National Framework reflects the importance of multi-agency working.

Kinship care responsibilities including private fostering duties are not referenced. A stronger reference to statutory duties towards disabled children, including inclusion and realising their potential would be welcomed.

9 The National Framework describes the role of 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.

Please provide your thoughts on the expectations for multi-agency working:

Expectations for multi-agency working are at their strongest where there is specific statutory guidance, partner agencies have a specific relevant duty or where activity falls within the child protection framework. Expectations around working with children in need, older children experiencing extrafamilial harm who are not subject to CP Plans, disabled children with complex needs and children living away from home all require attention.

All local agencies have the potential to know about and address the health and developmental needs of Children in Need in their area but resource pressures have led to a patchwork of inconsistent responses that won't be addressed by the proposals. This could be addressed by central government join up on NHS and other statutory services prioritising Children in Need, including disabled children. A cross departmental set of principles and shared outcomes for children is indicated ALDCS supports the national association's position that a third enabler is required with a focus on multi-agency partnership working. Throughout the framework, leaders of children's services are called on to 'ensure' a range of actions are undertaken, some of which sit outside of the influence of the DCS.

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.

Please provide your thoughts on the ways the Dashboard can support learning:

London DCS's share the concerns expressed by ADCS regarding both the usefulness of the dashboard and the use to which it will be put. Despite assurances that the dashboard will not become a performance management tool for DfE and other government departments or agencies, experience suggests otherwise.

It is felt that the dashboard is a missed opportunity to overhaul children's services data returns to focus upon outcomes and experience rather than build upon existing process orientated metrics. Many of the indicators have been in existence for a long period of time, some dating back to 1998. Recycling old indicators ostensibly for a new purpose does not seem to fit with the ambition for a 'once in a generation reform.'. It is hard to see the child when the bulk of the indicators are about the processes of delivering social care services.

Children's services do collect a range of rich and potentially powerful data which largely remains locked in individual LAs. Linking child level data across LAs (see for example London's child level data project) has the ability to enhance understanding of outcomes of CSC intervention for different cohorts of children. This appears a more valuable enterprise, when backed by dedicated research, than re-packaging and publishing current metrics.

*Q11. We think it will be best for the data to be published annually (we have answered 'six-monthly' because 'annually' wasn't an option below).

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

Six-monthly

Outcome, enabler and indicator questions

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

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

Please describe your views and limit your response to 200 words:

Two related and over-arching comments on the dashboard:

The work to support the new dashboard should be considered as a new burden of LAs and the activity to quality assure data (which will be published) means it is difficult to see this being done more than annually. The more frequent the update, the greater the new burden.

Comments in relation to sharpening this outcome:

- Repeat referrals: this indicator is at least 25 years old and understanding what it 'indicates' is still as problematic as ever, especially without local context, including the way partner agencies use referrals. It is important to understand whether this is for the same or a different reason, this measure can also speak to the appetite for risk across the local partnership.
- There are specific challenges around children who are "off the radar" of public service (not attending school, not registered with GP) – often linked to mobility which is a significant issue in London. Protecting babies and children with severe complex disabilities limiting communication opportunities.
- Emphasising the Think Family approaches is important – families come in many forms and there is an important link with aspirations around kinship care and involving the wider family and support network in a timely way.
- Rate of new entrants to care and rates of children in care are both examples of the importance of seeking local context given the established link between poverty and children's social care activity. For example, UASC presentations are very different depending on context.

Please provide your thoughts on the indicators :

- Number of episodes / times children are referred to children's social care / have involvement with SWs through their childhood.
- Impact of targeted early help and sustainable "step down." While we know there are issues with quality and consistency of data capture around early

help, the introduction of the dashboard should provide impetus to address these.

- Could we consider measurement of more positive child indicators/outcomes i.e. % children living in a stable loving home, engaged in meaningful EET, accessing Children's Centres/Healthy Child Programme etc following an assessment, CiN/CP or CiC episode? Strengths-based reporting could be a positive if data were publicly available?

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

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

Please provide your thoughts on this outcome:

On the percentage of children living within their family networks, clarity of definition is key. For example, there were differing interpretations amongst ADCS members about the inclusion of connected carers.

Please provide your thoughts on the indicators :

Opportunities for and use of family group decision making.

Currently Outcome 2 is measured by % of s31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents, and the age of the children in the proceedings and % of children in care living with their family networks – this should also measure children who stay home with family with a mobilised support network?

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

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

Please provide your thoughts on this outcome:

- Contributing to and learning from regional / sub-regional arrangements
- Leaders' role around weaving together different central government policy, initiatives and funding.
- Working across policy and organisational boundaries.
- Integrating local service design around children and family.
- Responding to the particular needs of unaccompanied children and young people

Please provide your thoughts on the indicators :

The chosen indicators (largely CP rates and referral rates) do not tell you how safe children are, particularly when shorn from local context.

Data from agencies other than children's services is important in understanding impact and outcomes in this sphere of activity. How are the proposed indicators joining to the MA data shared within safeguarding partnership arrangements, Youth Justice Partnership Boards and Strategic MACE etc in terms of what is already collected and how useful it is (or not)?

Other more relevant indicators derive from qualitative data around experience and outcomes such as participation in ETE of adolescents working with children's services.

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

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

Please provide your thoughts on this outcome:

The outcome being sought is well-described as are the expectations of leaders and practitioners. There are proposals, particularly linked to the RCC, which if implemented to their full extent as proposed, would have unforeseen consequences and be detrimental to the outcomes described in the framework (see both ADCS and ALDCS response to the main Stable Homes consultation). Other elements of the framework could be strengthened by:

- Recognising care-leaving status as a protected characteristic.
- Adding work with courts.
- Work with partners to promote the safety and well-being of children in secure settings recognising their particular vulnerabilities and the potential risk within secure environments and in resettling.

Please provide your thoughts on the indicators :

Enabler 1: the workforce is equipped and effective

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

Please provide your thoughts on this enabler:

The indicator is well-expressed and reflects the critical role of the workforce in enabling positive outcomes for children. The aspirations around stability and sufficiency of the workforce (as reflected in the chosen indicators) cannot be achieved without government action to regulate / constrain the use of agency social workers and provide conditions which support an adequate recruitment pipeline and conditions which support retention.

Please provide your thoughts on the indicators :

Capturing data on disproportionality at different levels within the workforce should be an ambition.

Vacancy rates in social work and in other children's post.

Proposed metrics only relate to social workers but the enabler speak to the whole children's workforce.

Enabler 2: leaders drive conditions for effective practice

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

Please provide your thoughts on this enabler:

See earlier comments on the value of a third enabler around partnerships and multi-agency work. DCSs and other social care leaders need cross-government support to ensure other partners invest in the services which promote children's safety and well-being. Without either powers for DCSs or requirements from sponsoring departments on partners, the leadership expectations expressed in the enabler are impossible to realise.

Please provide your thoughts on the indicators :

There is a question re the appropriateness of datasets in relation to leadership as an enabler; the effectiveness of leaders may be better understood through the lens of inspection or peer review.