

# Reforming Children's Social Care

Families First for Children Pathfinders – Wave 1

# Session structure

## I. Strategic overview

- Background
- Programme overview
- Key reform strands and issues
- Pre-existing local conditions for success
- Emerging issues
- The wider policy landscape
- Co-design process and programme timeline
- Engagement with the sector so far

## II. Local Models – Key Features & Challenges

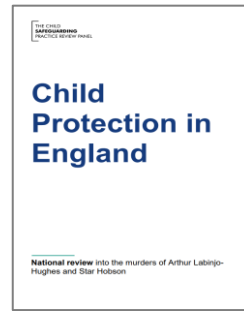
## III. Next Steps

# Background to the Pathfinder

Three reviews published last year provided a catalyst and vision to transform children's social care.



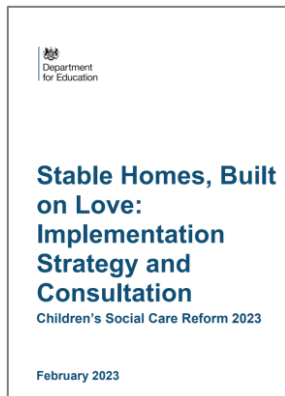
The Independent  
Review of Children's  
Social Care



National Review into  
the murders of Arthur  
Labinjo-Hughes and  
Star Hobson



The Competition and  
Markets Authority  
study into Children's  
Social Care Placements



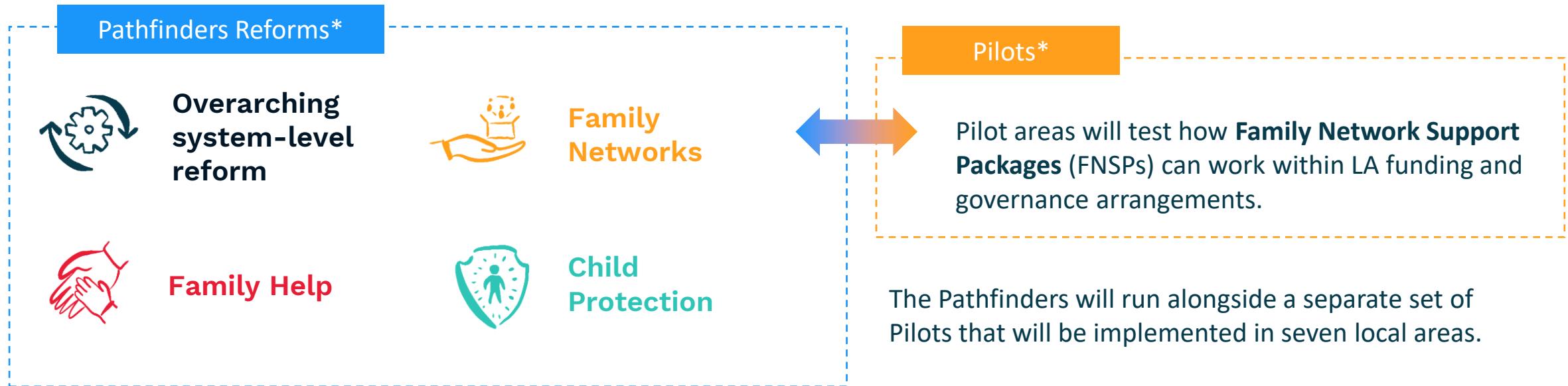
**In February 2023, the DfE published Stable Homes, Built on Love** strategy and consultation, backed by £200m. The strategy sets out a vision to rebalance children's social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support.

It included a **£45m commitment** for DfE to establish a pathfinder programme which will **design and test major reforms to children's services** from family help to the edge of care. The pathfinder will be used to work through key questions with multi-agency partners and establish how reforms could work best on the ground.

The DfE are concurrently running a **family network pilot** in 7 local authorities. This will test providing flexible funding for family networks to help keep families together and children out of care where appropriate.

# FFCP programme overview

The Pathfinder programme will enable government to understand the impact that reforms to multi-agency response, family support and child protection have on the different sectors involved, at a smaller scale, before making decisions on further roll out.



*\*A Pathfinder differs from a Pilot: A Pathfinder is not seeking to prove that reform works, but to test how reform should be delivered most effectively on the frontline. This programme includes both a Pathfinder across all reforms and a Pilot focussing specifically on FNSPs.*

# Key reform strands

There are four key reform strands to the pathfinder that will be delivered as a whole system transformation.

## Overarching system reform and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)



Establishing a system-wide, 'families first' culture, underpinned by clear and shared MASA and effective information-sharing. Strengthening the role of education at strategic level.

## Family networks



Greater use of family networks, with earlier use of family group decision-making throughout family help and child protection, facilitated by targeted funding to enable more children to live safely at home or support a transition into kinship care.

## Family help



Ensuring families can access the right support at the right time. Locally based, multi-disciplinary family help services providing welcoming, seamless support tailored to the needs of children and families.

## Child protection



Dedicated and skilled multi-agency child protection teams, including social workers with greater child protection expertise and experience and working closely with family help to protect children suffering or at risk of significant harm. Parental representation and family network engagement in child protection processes.

# Pre-existing conditions

**Leadership**

**Financial Stability**

**Robust Practice**

**Investment in Early  
Help**

**Permanent  
Workforce**

**Local Political  
Support**

# Emerging Issues

## Overarching system reform and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)



- Securing **buy in from partners**
- **Financial sustainability**
- Role of **education**:
- **Multi-agency information-sharing**: logistics and national direction
- Clarifying and understanding **outcomes**

## Family networks



- Concerns that FNSPs could unintentionally create unsustainable, long-term dependency and a perceived '**hierarchy of care**' with existing, enhanced packages of support available for family and friend foster carers
- What happens if or when families are refused FNSPs

# Emerging Issues

## Family help



- Moving across **thresholds**
- **Case holding** arrangements, including oversight and supervision
- **FHLP** role: training and development requirements,
- **Transparency for families** – ensuring they are aware of, can consent (or not) to and understand transitions

## Child protection



- how to **reconcile different partner frameworks**, priorities and constraints; defining shared vision and purpose;
- LCCP role: defining the **level/length of experience required**;
- **Parental representation**: how and when to offer to all families



# Pathfinders within a context



**Recruitment**

**Retention**

**Funding**

**Partner Challenges**

**General Election**

**Wider Public  
Service Pressures**

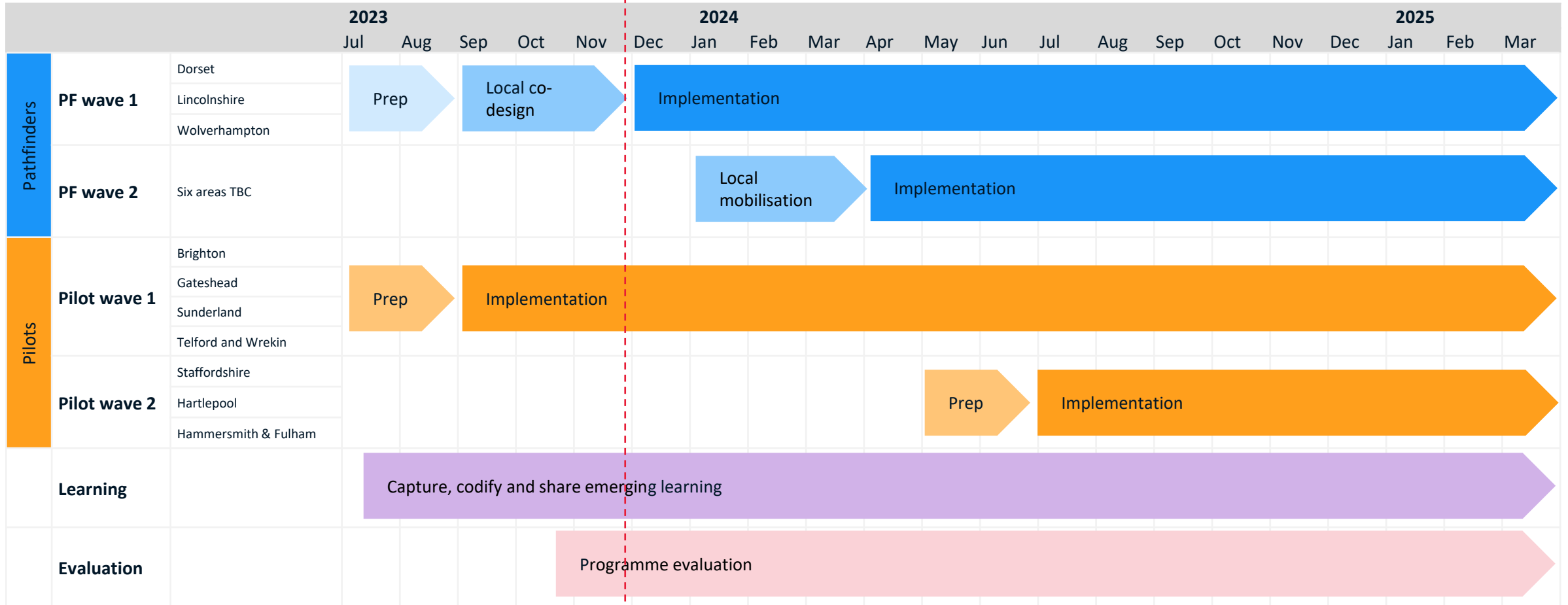
# The wider policy landscape



Programme	Description	2023	2024	2025
<b>Foster Carer Recruitment &amp; Retention</b>	Putting in place end-to-end improvements in foster care through a recruitment and retention programme, on a regional footprint. North East pathfinder, 'Foster with North East' went live September 2023. 9 other programmes will go live summer 2024.		Pilot	Wider rollout
<b>Regional Care Cooperatives Pathfinders</b>	Co-designing and testing regional commissioning model, in partnership with the sector		Stage 2	
<b>Families First for Children Pathfinder</b>	Testing reform delivery across: Family Help, Child Protection and Family Networks, before considering wider roll out. Applications for wave 2 now closed.		Wave 1	Wave 2
<b>Family Network Support Packages Pilot</b>	Test the impact of introducing new Family Network Support Packages (FNSPs ) that enable the network to step in and provide support where there is a financial barrier to them doing so, and allows children to live safely within their family networks, when it is in their best interests.		Wave 1	Wave 2
<b>Kinship Carers Training &amp; Support</b>	Bespoke offer available to all kinship carers to be developed and rolled out. Training to be offered to all LAs, so there will not be an LA bidding process.			Delivery
<b>Early Career Framework</b>	To support and develop social workers in the first years in practice and then enable them to develop expert level skills and knowledge. Expert Writing Group led by Laura Eden developing the framework document which will form the basis for the programme.		Design with early adopters	
<b>Data and Digital Solutions Fund</b>	Funding to work in partnership with LAs to gain a thorough understanding of some of the data and digital problems they face and where LAs have developed good practice which can be shared with others.	Delivery		

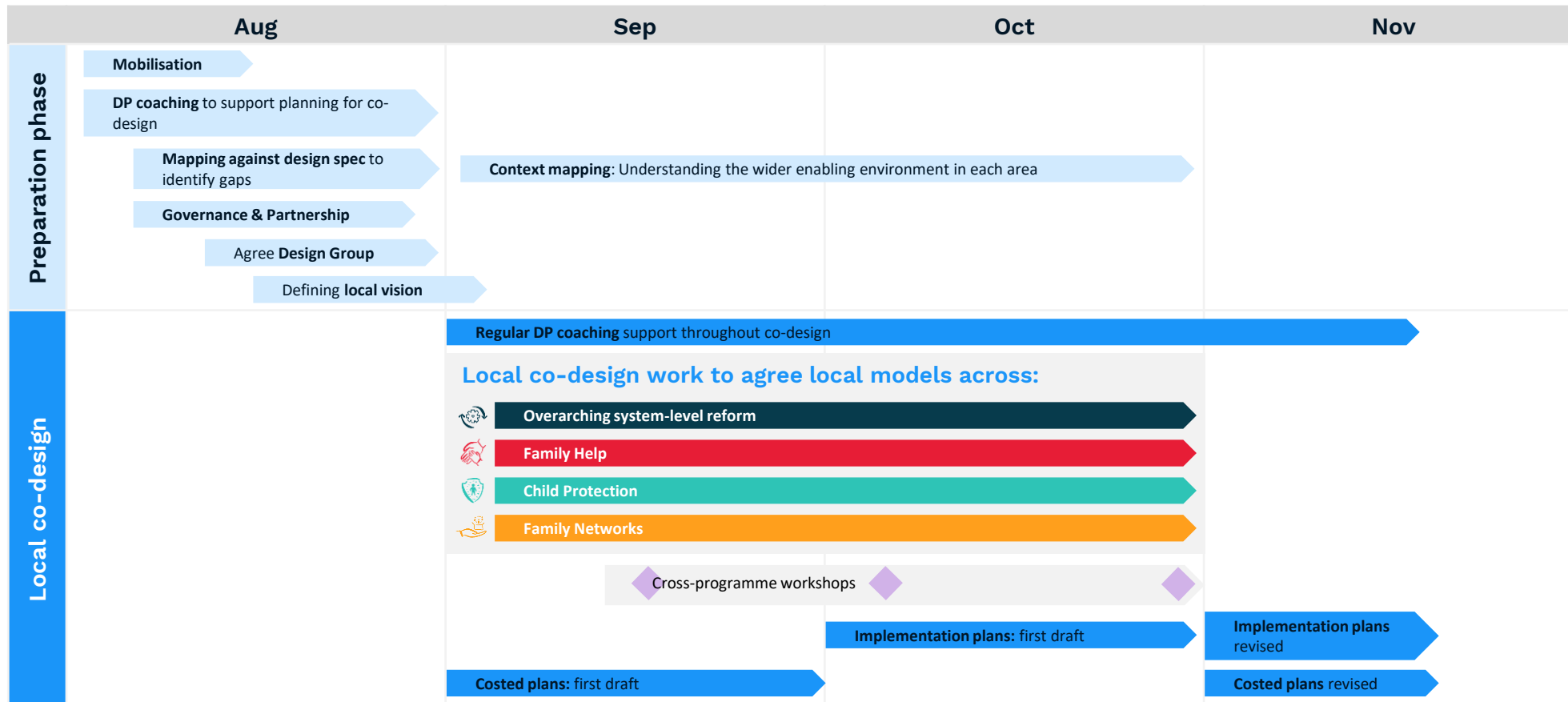
Families First for Children Pathfinder - Wave 1

# FFCP Programme timeline



# Co-design process

All three wave 1 Pathfinder Areas have had the opportunity to engage their partners, practitioners and representatives of the voice of the child and families in a local co-design process, to design a new practice model, tailored to their local context, on the basis of the design specification. Regular policy engagement was facilitated via cross-programme workshops, to identify policy challenges across all three areas.



# Engagement to date



## ADCS

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In August DfE and ADCS established a pathfinder expert reference group, including DCS representatives from the nine LA regions and the three pathfinder DCSs. The group meets monthly to explore complex policy and delivery issues arising from the pathfinder.

## Sector groups

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**Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, National Panel, National Practice Group, Safeguarding Partners Engagement Group, National Implementation Board, Charities CEO Forum**

DfE leads a process to engage and consult with these groups to provide updates on or seek input at critical points in the programme. For example, the programme engaged these groups in the development of the pathfinder policy design specification, as well as on issues arising from co-design.

## Other Government Departments, inspectorates and agencies

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**(DLUHC, DHSC, Home Office, HMT, MoJ, DWP)**

OGDs and inspectorates (including Ofsted) are members of both the DfE's Pathfinder Programme Board and the cross-Government, inspectorates and partners co-design working group (the latter alongside national police and health partners). We also discuss relevant issues with OGDs, inspectorates and partners on an ad hoc basis before or as they arise.

Both inspectorates and OGDs reviewed and provided comments on the design specification which sets out the minimum expectations for pathfinder areas.

## Police and health national bodies

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Police and health partners (National Police Chiefs' Council, Vulnerability, Knowledge and Practice Programme and NHS England) are represented on the cross-Government, inspectorates and partners co-design working group. They are also involved in specific discussions at critical points in the programme (e.g. sharing and unpicking issues arising through co-design), and national facilitators for the police and LAs (health facilitator post currently vacant) have been involved in wider aspects of co-design.

*\*This is a summary of engagement and is not an exhaustive list.*

# Our Model

Local conditions for success, key features and challenges

# Key features (Lincolnshire)

## Safeguarding Partners

- Exploring the role of the Partnership Chair and maintain effective scrutiny and assurance.
- Seconded Education Lead for a fixed term period to influence across all 4 pillars.
- Improving access to information and data sharing across partnership.

## Family networks

- Creating clarity and consistency for families in relation to FGDM: Family Network meetings
- Family Network meetings for all CYP and increasing our FGC offer
- Timely access to FNSPs to support families

## Family help

- Enhancing support to Family Help practitioners outside the LA to maximise impact to prevent escalation.
- Integrated Early Help and Social Care Front Door
- Target additional training to support professionals to lead Family Help in the Early Years.

## Child protection

- Developmental pathway for Level 1 Social Workers
- Dedicated strategic MACPTs in each locality – CP lead, Education Co-ordinators, Police, Health Duty workers and probation to sit alongside CS staff as key advisors on CP cases.

# Key challenges (Lincolnshire)

## Safeguarding Partners

- Ensuring new arrangements are manageable and effective.
- Role and responsibilities of independent scrutineer
- Education as the 4th strategic partner

## Family networks

- FNSPs – potential for duplication
- Transparent eligibility criteria and decision making
- Compliance with statutory requirements

## Family help

- Sustainability
- Workforce
- Complexity of casework within Early Help.
- Protecting what works well in Lincolnshire.

## Child protection

- Lead child protection professional holding a mixed caseload
- Workforce implications of trialling new models
- Maintaining relationship - based practice model
- Developmental space for SW progression.
- MACPT co-location



# Our Model

Local conditions for success, key features and challenges

# Key features (Wolverhampton)

## Safeguarding Partners



- Strengthen the voice and executive lead of education across the city through appointing a strategic Education lead.
- Build on existing strong Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. Delegated authority appropriately allocated to deputies with measures and reporting to ensure CEOs are fully cited on progress and safeguarding matters.

## Family networks



- Building on existing model of family meetings we will offer Family Group Conferencing & Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) earlier ensuring resilience.
- FGDM workers will be independent and allocated at the earliest opportunity to support and develop family network.
- Family Network Support Plans will be agreed locally and provide an opportunity for creative packages of support to enable children to remain within their birth family where safe to do so.

## Family help



- One assessment and one family led plan – Families tell their story once
- Commission additional specialist provision & services to effectively respond to each locality's needs. Building on the existing range of services already accessible through Family Hubs.
- Upskill the multi agency workforce and maintain high standards of practice.
- Utilising principles of reflective group supervision to support Family Help Lead Practitioners

## Child protection



- Build the Multi- agency Child Protection Team on the successful Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub 24 and Child Assessment Team (CAT) arrangements.
- Offer advocacy earlier for all families in the child protection space.
- Centralised city wide MACPT with each LCPP having dedicated links to each Family Help team.

# Key challenges (Wolverhampton)

## Safeguarding Partners



- Embedding Education as a strategic partner: how and who?

## Family networks



- Defining support packages to families
- Time pressures

## Family help



- Effective delivery of family help ensuring it enhances the range of support currently available
- Roles & responsibilities and workforce development
- Legislative framework to support delivery
- Meeting OfSTED requirements

## Child protection



- Defining the LCPP role ensuring the system does not become more confusing for families at times of high anxiety
- Being clear about roles and responsibilities when families experience co-working arrangements

# Our Model

Local conditions for success, key features and challenges

# Key features (Dorset)

## Safeguarding Partners



- Corporate Director for Education will be a member of our safeguarding partnership
- Nominated education sector leads on partnership sub-groups
- Designated VS lead to have a seat at the Board table
- Family Advisory Boards

## Family help



- A single, integrated, conversation based front door
- “Early Support” Commissioning through VCS led local offers
- Family Hubs as outlet for Family Help and Child Protection services
- Enhanced Locality Model structure for Child protection, Family Help and Inclusion & Belonging
- Merged Early Help and CIN (with 80% most complex CIN held in Family Help)
- “Social work oversight”

## Family networks



- Family Group Conferencing for all CP cases
- Family Network Meetings in Family Help and Permanence
- Community led Family Network Support Packages
- Independent Family Group Decision Making a prerequisite to accessing Family Network Support Packages

## Child protection



- 20% Most complex CIN cases held in CP teams
- “Safeguarding Families Together” and group supervision
- Testing LCPP chairing CP case conferences
- Hybrid Multi Agency Child Protection Teams
- Lead Child Protection Practitioners
- Lower caseloads

# Key challenges (Dorset)

## Safeguarding Partners



- How to adequately represent the diversity of education sector
- Non-Independent chair of the safeguarding partnership

## Family networks



- Legislative framework re. kinship carers – are the fostering standards the best ‘threshold’ for care giving
- Holding FNM’s outside of LA?

## Family help



- Legislative Framework re CIN case holding
- Family Worker competency framework – needs development but parity of pay established
- Dual allocation of FHLP and LCPP

## Child protection



- Dedicated partner resource in MACPT’s
- CP conference chairing
- Models for parental representation and advocacy

# Next steps

## Continued Implementation

- **Pathfinder Wave 1**
  - Workforce engagement
  - Local implementation plans
- **Pathfinder Wave 2**
  - Reviewing and refining design specification for wave 2, learning from wave 1;
  - local model development (early 2024) followed by implementation, with coaching from the delivery partner;
  - Delivery partner will create learning materials and a community of practice .

## Evaluation

- **Independent evaluator: consortium incl. Verian (formerly Kantar Public), Alma Economics, and the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) to undertake an implementation and process evaluation, impact evaluation, and economic evaluation across the programme.**

## Stakeholder engagement

- Will continue to engage with key stakeholders and groups across the sector, including families/experts by experience; and increase and expand engagement as we move into delivery, underpinned by regular updates and learning events.
- Will align with wider CSC reform learning events;
- will continue ADCS reference group to link and share learning across the sector