

# Consultation

## **CoramBAAF submission to the consultation on Children's Social Care National Framework and Dashboard**

**11 May 2023**

### **General National Framework and Dashboard questions**

#### **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:**

That the framework is divided into sections for practitioners and leaders is helpful in differentiating responsibilities. There remains a lot of information for practitioners to digest and consider as part of the standards. Many of the categories will not be standalone as working with a child/family may encompass several areas covered by the framework at the same time which may require more detailed knowledge and memory of all the standards.

#### **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:**

The Working Together guidance is likely to be updated every year according to the implementation strategy document. If this is the case, then the framework need to be updated at the same time and communicating any changes with multi-agency partners will be important. The framework sets out broad principles which multi-agency partners can consider. However, in our experience it is more likely that multi agency partners will seek advice through consulting their own sector specific statutory guidance. It is important for the framework to consider and be in line with relevant statutory guidance that sits outside the Department for Education in order to support multi-agency working.

#### **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:**

Data on its own will not provide learning. This will only happen through interrogating and exploring the data and understanding what is underneath it and applying that to practice. A key challenge will be linking the actual practice which the data derives from, to the figures accumulated on the dashboard. For example, where one local authority has a higher proportion of referrals where there is “no further action” than other local authorities, the challenge will be understanding what is happening in this local authority that is different to the others to cause this. Looking at data alone or standalone figures and seeking to improve them as they sit on a national dashboard may skew results or result in inappropriate targeting of action at a local level. There are internal audits in local authorities looking at cases or particular work streams to learn and identify action for improvement.

A benefit could be sharing some of that learning across local authorities. This would require a level of transparency or openness between local authorities about internal practice.

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

Quarterly Outcome, enabler and indicator questions

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

**12a. 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:**

- Measuring assessments completed may not be entirely useful at a national level. In most cases assessments should be completed and it is not clear what this specific data may add.
- There is nothing which measures the quality of the child’s assessment. It is not just the rate of assessments but the quality of decision making, analysis and support provided that matters to the outcomes for children and young people.

**Please provide your thoughts on the indicators:**

- This set of data does not mention kinship care which will be integral to families staying together and achieving the family first approach.
- Data on siblings being separated when looked after may be useful under this heading.
- A child returning home from care is also an outcome and could be considered at same time as new entrants to care.
- s.17 - child in need is based on consent and is voluntary and families may refuse any assessment or support under this. This could result in repeat referrals which could skew data and mean there is limited learning from this dataset.



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

**13a. 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? Please provide your thoughts on the indicators:**

Measuring the number of section 31 proceedings that end with the child living with parents is a crude measure. It is also concerning that examining the percentage may be problematic when in each of those cases the child's welfare should have been the paramount consideration, and decisions will be based on that important principle. There is a risk that there may be too much emphasis on the rate rather than the decision itself. If there are plans to measure the rates of children who stay within family networks there is additional data that could be relevant. We need to track those children who stay within family network but who then need to move to unrelated foster care. We also need to consider the rate of children placed in unrelated foster care who are then moved to family networks. Whilst this data may not be as easy to identify this would provide a more detailed view.

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

**14a. 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: Please provide your thoughts on the indicators:**

Many 16 and 17 years olds are homeless and this impacts on their safety and wellbeing. A measure of the number of 16 and 17 who are homeless and supported under s.17 or s.20 may be useful to consider.

Data about the number of young people who are aged 16 and 17 in supported accommodation would also be useful to consider.

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

**15a. 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: Please provide your thoughts on the indicators:**

We suggest a measure in relation to the stability of placements of children in care. For example what proportion of Looked After Children have had fewer than 2 placement moves in the last 2 years? Strengths and Difficulties scores for Children in care is a poor measurement choice. The data that is often provided from a local authority in relation to this will often be averaged scores taken across many children. This can result in data that is not particularly useful. This will not say much about the mental health needs or wellbeing of children in care and nor will it say anything about their support needs and whether they are receiving adequate support. Alternatives could include other indicators such as suicide/self-harm/death/numbers of admissions to accident and emergency due to mental ill health of children in care.



## **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: Please provide your thoughts on the indicators:**

The turnover rates locally and what this means for children is important for us to know. A child may have had multiple changes of social worker unrelated to turnover but linked to changes in internal team structures within a local authority. We believe that regularity of supervision and training for social workers should be considered at the same time as turnover. Sickness rates could be considered to show impact of stress and illness of workforce.

## **Enabler 2: leaders drive conditions for effective practice**

**17a. 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: Please provide your thoughts on the indicators:**

The data sought in this section and overall is limited and not child centred. If we are looking at the system as a whole we need to know how children experience it. If the data collected is not child centred we do not believe it will be helpful or provide significant learning. There is a further risk that by simply measuring and reporting on these indicators then this may result in changes to policy and practice at a local level in order to “improve” on the data. This may lead to unintended consequences.