

Press release: £20 million improvement programme for children's social care

- Sector-led improvement initiative for local authorities, backed by £20 million
- Launch of new What Works Centre for children's social care

A multi-million pound government initiative to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families has been announced today by Robert Goodwill, Minister for Children and Families.

In a speech to the National Children and Adults Services (NCAS) conference in Bournemouth, Minister Goodwill announced up to £20 million for a new programme to help all councils improve their services – with a sharp focus on making sure those at risk of failure can make vital improvements.

The programme will give councils the tools they need to build stronger services for our most vulnerable children. This includes:

- Tailored peer support for local authorities, bringing in more councils to the successful Partners in Practice programme;
- The testing of 'Regional Improvement Alliances', made up of neighbouring local authorities. Alliances will see councils challenging each other on standards, agreeing local improvement priorities, and sharing best practice, in order to deliver more for children and families.

In his speech at the NCAS conference today, Minister Goodwill said:

There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of children. Yet, too many young people, and their families, are being let down by poor quality services – or worse, left at risk of harm. That is why we must take decisive action where performance is not good enough.

Our interventions programme is yielding real results: 36 local authorities have been lifted out of intervention since 2010 and we are seeing a positive impact from the independent children's social care trusts that we have set up in Doncaster and Slough.

My commitment is that we will build a self-improving system, one that spots where challenges are emerging, and quickly puts the right support in place.

In addition, the Department for Education has announced that [Nesta](#) will set up its new What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, with a focus on improving outcomes for children who are at risk of, or suffering from, abuse or neglect.

The Centre will develop a powerful evidence base that supports best practice on the frontline.

This is a key part of the government's commitment to ensuring experts and practitioners across the country learn from the latest best practice.

Geoff Mulgan, Chief Executive of Nesta, said:

This new What Works Centre is a great opportunity to support improvement in children's care – and ultimately to improve the lives of many children who deserve better.

Nesta and our partners Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), the Alliance for Useful Evidence, FutureGov and Traversum will be working very closely with frontline professionals, listening, learning and adapting to feedback and evidence throughout this set-up phase. We'll also draw on the experiences of other What Works Centres on how to gather evidence, but even more importantly, how to make it useful and used.

Working in partnership with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Local Government Association (LGA), the Department will also test new Regional Improvement Alliances. These will enable local authorities to assess their own performance, and to challenge the performance of regional peers. Alliances will become the backbone of the new improvement system, with the aim of setting one up in every region by April 2018.

Five councils will now begin taking the National Assessment and Accreditation System forward in its first phase (alpha), with a further 12 -13 in the second phase (beta).

The Department for Education has today invited local authorities with a good or better Ofsted judgement overall and across all sub-judgments to express an interest in joining the Partners in Practice programme, with an assessment and selection process to follow.