

News story: Minister announces £17 million to improve children's services

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi has today announced a package of support worth £17 million to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

More than £15 million will go to eight new Partners in Practice, to expand a peer support programme between local authorities to improve children's services.

The government is also announcing £2 million to improve leadership in children's social care services, which will be delivered through the Local Government Association (LGA).

The funding is part of the Government's £20 million improvement strategy for children's social care, and will see the Partners in Practice Programme – children's services which are rated 'good' by Ofsted – develop and share strong practice, and deliver hands-on peer support to other councils, to help improve outcomes for more children and their families across the country.

Minister for Children and Families Nadhim Zahawi said:

Social workers do an incredible job providing some of our most vulnerable children in our society with life-changing care and support.

This investment for our Partners in Practice Programme will help the fantastic work councils are doing to deliver high-quality services and make a real difference to children's lives.

I am also pleased to support the Local Government Association to drive good leadership, which is crucial if we want to support and encourage frontline staff to deliver excellent care for children and young people.

This investment comes from £20 million announced at the National Children's and Adults Services (NCAS) conference last year (October 2017), to provide additional support for councils at risk of service failure and to help create a system of continuous improvement. Through the funding, the LGA will create a package of support to ensure lead council members have the skills they need to scrutinise performance and drive improvement in children's services.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Local Government Association's Children and Young People Board, said:

We are pleased that the Minister has backed the LGA's call for children's improvement funding. This will help to deliver an enhanced programme of sector-led support to councils, offering everything from regular 'health checks' and training for lead members and senior officers.

The achievements of councils through the sector-led improvement approach demonstrate its success and shows what councils can achieve by working together and supporting one another.

Phil Norrey, the Solace spokesperson for Children and Families and Chief Executive of Devon County Council, said:

This is welcome investment for children's services, good news for the children and families we serve and a vote of confidence in local government as a whole. Sector led improvement has proven itself effective in other areas and we are pleased by the recognition that chief executives and whole council leadership is needed to drive meaningful change.

Solace looks forward to working with our partners on this bid – the Local Government Association, Association of Directors of Children's Services and Department for Education – to challenge and support our colleagues across the country.

The new Partners in Practice are Ealing, Camden, North Tyneside and South Tyneside in partnership, Essex, Stockport, Hackney, East Riding of Yorkshire and Doncaster Trust. The Partners in Practice Programme and the Innovation Programme are part of the government's ambitious reforms to children's social care, backed by to up to £250 million.