

The following response was drafted in partnership with BASW England members in response to the DfE consultation [Child Protection Authority - Department for Education - Citizen Space](#)

**Chapter 2: Overview**

How else might the Panel develop its role to help explore potential CPA functions in the interim period while the CPA is being consulted on and created?

The Panel should explicitly recognise social work as a central safeguarding profession with distinct expertise in assessment and court work, and the direct service delivery role, including the provision of short and longer-term support, protection, and care services to children and families. During the transition, it should focus on embedding workforce sustainability and wellbeing into its remit, acknowledging that system effectiveness relies on stable, supported practitioners who have the time and space for reflective, child-centred practice.

What more could we do to make sure that the design of the CPA will contribute to the work to tackle VAWG?

The CPA should be designed around relationship-based, rights-focused, and anti-oppressive principles and practice. By avoiding a risk-averse or compliance-driven culture, the CPA can better support victims and survivors of VAWG. Furthermore, the CPA must ensure that its design does not duplicate the work of the new National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls, but rather complements it through clear system-wide leadership

**Chapter 3: Oversight**

Do you agree with the proposals set out for how the CPA will have national oversight of the child protection system?  
[Yes/ No/ If no, why?]

**Yes, with conditions.** Oversight must prioritise shared accountability across all agencies (Health, Police, Education) rather than attributing system failures primarily to children’s social care or individual

	<p>practitioners. Furthermore, social work expertise must be embedded in the CPA's advisory and governance arrangements to ensure national priorities reflect real-world practice.</p>
<p>How should the CPA advise government on systemic risks and emerging themes in child protection?</p>	<p>Advice should prioritise resources available in the sector to facilitate professional social work judgment, reflective practice, and trauma-informed approaches over narrow performance management. The CPA should specifically monitor and report on the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Independent Chairs of Child Protection Conferences with any undermining of this role within the FFPP framework representing a significant systemic risk to the independent oversight of children in care.</p>
<p>Do you agree with the proposals set out for how the CPA will horizon scan? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> However, "horizon scanning" must look beyond practice trends to include societal pressures. Workforce pressures such as high caseload levels and recruitment/retention difficulties must be treated as core systemic risks within all national oversight and scanning activities. The description of sources used to inform horizon scanning does not include the voices of children, young people and families. It should include these and it should also be clear that by 'research' this includes both qualitative and quantitative research. Horizon scanning must also involve scanning high-quality research published by social work academics in the UK and overseas by fostering formal links with the social work academy."</p>

<p>Do you agree that a national body should monitor diverse information sources to identify emerging threats to child protection? [Yes/ No/ If no, why]</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> This is vital, provided the "diverse sources" include the impacts of access to timely mental health services, substance use services, and appropriate housing, all of which directly impact family stability and child safety.</p> <p>Diverse sources should also include the voices of children, young people and families who use child protection services. Both qualitative and quantitative research.</p>
<p>Do you agree with the proposals set out for how the CPA will build data and analytical expertise? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>Yes, provided it is proportionate.</b> Data functions must be designed to reduce, not increase, the administrative burden on frontline practitioners. Expertise should be focused on "big picture" systemic trends rather than increasing procedural compliance reporting which tends to fall on social workers.</p> <p>Qualitative data (gathered for the purposes of understanding the welfare needs of children and young people) should have equal weight to quantitative data. By qualitative data we mean information that is based on the views and experiences of children, young people and families, informed by social work professional judgment. Police data and intelligence data (gathered for the purposes of crime reduction and not safeguarding) should never be used as the primary source for making safeguarding decisions.</p>
<p>Are the data sources set out above the right ones for the CPA to identify risks and systemic issues? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p>The CPA must utilise a mix of quantitative, qualitative, longitudinal, and mixed-methods research. It is essential to partner with the social work and cross-professional academy to ensure the knowledge base for practice is robust and multi-dimensional.</p>

<p>How can the CPA ensure its data and intelligence work complements local efforts and avoids duplication with existing systems and responsibilities? [Free Text]</p>	<p>By focusing on high-level societal and multi-agency pressures that local authorities cannot easily track alone. The CPA should avoid creating new, redundant reporting requirements for local safeguarding partnerships and instead pull from existing multi-agency datasets.</p>
<p>What types of national reports, dashboards, or analytical products would be most useful to practitioners and policymakers? [Free Text]</p>	<p>Dashboards that track the correlation between "upstream" factors (workforce stability, housing, mental health wait times) and "downstream" child protection outcomes. This would shift the focus from blaming individual agencies to understanding system-wide health.</p>
<p>Do you agree with the proposals set out for how the CPA will identify and address evidence gaps? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> The CPA should focus on the evidence gap regarding how workforce wellbeing and retention impact the quality of child protection interventions, ensuring that "workforce sustainability" is seen as a prerequisite for system effectiveness. The CPA should not limit itself to drawing evidence only from systematic reviews, like What Works centres or prioritise Randomised Control Trials as a supposed 'gold standard' as there is little rationale for this within the delivery of complex human services and it will this will limit its ability to meet its aims.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 4: Learning</b></p>	
<p>Do you agree with the proposals set out for how the CPA will promote and embed good practice? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>No.</b> The CPA must ensure that the learning culture it promotes is restorative and psychologically safe rather than punitive. Proposals must avoid overly prescriptive guidance that limits professional discretion. Instead the CPA should focus on strengthening critical thinking and ethical decision-making.</p>

<p>How can the CPA work collaboratively with your organisation to promote learning, innovation and continuous improvement in child protection?</p>	<p>By actively involving social workers and professional bodies in the co-production of learning resources and practice frameworks. BASW must be a key stakeholder in this work. Innovation should be integrated into existing structures like supervision and continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure it is practitioner-friendly. This must be done in partnership with schools of social work, providing opportunities for practitioners to contribute to the knowledge base by undertaking professional or research doctorates. The CPA should partner with schools of social work and independent funders (e.g., NIHR, Nuffield) to fund experienced social workers to undertake Doctoral and Post-Doctoral studies.</p>
<p>Do you agree with the proposals set out for how the CPA will support research and evidence? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>No.</b> While supporting research is vital, there must be a shift in terminology. We recommend using the overarching term 'evidence-informed' for general practice, reserving 'evidence-based' only for specific interventions (e.g., knowledge about the impact of trauma). Clearer language is needed to avoid confusing interchangeable terms.</p>
<p>How should the CPA prioritise research topics, particularly in collaboration with existing What Works Centre and research bodies?</p>	<p>Research should prioritise what improves outcomes in real practice contexts, specifically relationship-based and anti-racist approaches. It must move beyond a narrow focus on Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) and quantitative data, which often sideline qualitative research, the narratives of people using services, and cultural contexts.</p>
<p>How can the CPA ensure that commissioned research is accessible, relevant, and used effectively by practitioners?</p>	<p>By ensuring research is broad and includes contributions from social work academics in schools of social work. It must be translated into</p>

	practitioner-friendly formats that can be easily discussed within a team or supervision setting.
How can we ensure that the CPA has the evidence-base embedded in the child protection system?	Ensure the evidence-base reflects the "nuanced realities" of social work. This is achieved by valuing lived experiences and qualitative insights alongside quantitative metrics, ensuring the evidence feels relevant to the frontline.
What risks or challenges do you foresee in establishing a national body to synthesise and advise on child protection learning?	The primary risk is creating a "compliance-driven" culture that produces a blame-oriented environment. If the body becomes too prescriptive, it risks stifling professional judgment and ethical decision-making in complex cases. There is a growing understanding of the role of young workers alongside social workers to address harm outside the home – this unique combination of expertise and skill is not reflected in the proposal.
What content, features, or formats would make a national learning platform most useful for improving child protection practice in your local context?	The platform must be integrated into supervision, training, and CPD. It should use clear, consistent language and offer resources that are co-produced with practitioners to ensure they are restorative and improvement-focused.
Do you agree with the proposals set out on how the CPA can support workforce and training? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]	<b>Yes, if co-produced.</b> Training support should focus on professional judgment and trauma-informed approaches. It must recognise that practitioners need psychological safety to learn effectively from serious incidents. Training support should be aligned with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), pairing the career aspirations of social workers with employer needs. Post-qualifying learning must not be narrowly focused

	<p>on maltreatment and court systems, but should include specialisms such as working with disabled children and parents (who are over-represented in serious case reviews), fostering, adoption, and youth justice</p>
<p>Do you support the CPA working with regulators and professional bodies, and national government, to promote consistent training standards across safeguarding partners? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> However, these standards should be developed in partnership with professional bodies and social work academics to ensure they reflect current practice realities and the expertise of the social work profession.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 5: Improvement</b></p>	
<p>Do you agree with the proposals set out for the CPA to support multi-agency learning and improvements? [Yes/ No/ If no, why?]</p>	<p><b>Yes, with conditions.</b> System improvement is only achievable if the CPA focuses on enabling change through support and coordination rather than relying on monitoring and enforcement. Proposals must ensure that improvement activity prioritises service quality, continuity of relationships, and early intervention over narrow metrics like speed or case throughput.</p> <p>Improvement activity should leverage locally-based Teaching Partnerships (between Local Authorities and Universities). Though no longer DfE-funded, many remain thriving and are uniquely placed to scan and disseminate learning from Safeguarding Children Autumn Reviews (SCARS/SCRs).</p>
<p>Do you believe your sector would benefit from additional support from the CPA when implementing recommendations and improvements? [Yes/ No/ If no why?]</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> However, this support must focus on the removal of systemic barriers. The CPA should provide a mechanism to address external factors that prevent local improvement, such as funding gaps and</p>

	<p>workforce instability, rather than treating these as purely organisational shortcomings.</p>
<p>What do you think are the most persistent barriers to implementing recommendations from local and national reviews effectively?</p>	<p>The most persistent barriers are a lack of sustained attention to workforce capacity, excessive workloads, and poor retention both in social worker and management roles. When the system is under-resourced, the "quality of supervision" suffers, making it impossible to embed learning from reviews. Additionally, high demand and funding pressures often force a focus on compliance rather than the quality of practice.</p> <p>An unclear and inconsistent policy landscape is also a barrier to implementing recommendations when it comes to young people harmed beyond the family home (a growing number of young people). Questions arise at the practice level about whether crime prevention (Crime and Disorder Act) or welfare (Children's Act) should be prioritised in situations where attribution or harm is blurred. Clarity is needed to support implementation from Serious Case Reviews.</p>
<p>How do you think the CPA could best monitor the implementation of recommendations from reviews?</p>	<p>Monitoring should be proportionate and aware of context. The CPA should track not just whether a recommendation was "completed," but whether the necessary systemic conditions (such as manageable caseloads and staff stability) are in place to make that change sustainable. It must look at the "health of the system" as a whole.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 6: Structure</b></p>	

<p>What sort of body should the CPA be?</p>	<p>The CPA should be structured as an independent body that preserves a clear separation between system leadership, inspection (Ofsted), and professional regulation (Social Work England). This is vital to avoid role creep and ensure that its mission of "learning and leadership" is not compromised by regulatory or enforcement duties.</p> <p>The CPA must be fundamentally concerned with the integration of Knowledge, Values, and Practice/Skills. Its structure must formally include the Social Work Research and Teaching Academy to ensure the 'knowledge' component of the system is as beefed up as the 'practice' component</p>
<p>How can we ensure that the CPA's leadership and workforce have the right balance of professional expertise and independence?</p>	<p>Governance and staffing must include strong, direct representation from experienced social workers and workforce experts alongside other safeguarding leads. It should not be a purely administrative body as it must be rooted in the practical expertise of the professions it oversees.</p>
<p>How can we ensure that the CPA remains independent and provides impartial advice to government?</p>	<p>By establishing formal, permanent mechanisms for engagement with professional bodies. Specifically, key decision-making bodies within the CPA should include a permanent seat for professional associations like BASW and representatives from the social work education and research sector to ensure that advice to government remains grounded in professional ethics and frontline reality rather than political cycles.</p>
<p>How can the CPA best involve children, young people, and victims/survivors in its work?</p>	<p>Engagement must be meaningful, sustained, and trauma-informed, moving beyond "tick-box" consultation exercises. Survivors and children</p>

	should have a formal role in co-designing the CPA's priorities, ensuring their lived experience directly shapes the national learning agenda.
What steps should the CPA take to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable and underrepresented children are heard?	The CPA should partner with frontline practitioners and specialist advocacy groups who already hold trusted relationships with these children. This ensures that engagement is psychologically safe and that the CPA reaches those who are often silenced by standard bureaucratic processes.