



Leading Effective Multi-Agency Partnerships for Supporting Children at Risk of Violence

Thursday 20 March

Speaker Biographies

Biographies have been provided by the speakers

Minister Daby MP - Minister for Children and Families, Department for Education
[@janetdaby.bsky.social](#)

Janet Daby was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Children and Families) at the Department for Education on 9 July 2024. She was elected as the Labour MP for Lewisham East in June 2018. Prior to entering parliament, Minister Daby was a children's social worker - working as an independent social work consultant, and in fostering. She has also served as a board member and peer mentor for the Local Government Association and as the Chair of Directors of Whitefoot and Downham Community Food Plus Project

Prof. Carlene Firmin - Professor of Social Work, Durham University
Bluesky [@carlenefirmin.bsky.social](#)
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Prof. Carlene Firmin is Professor of Social Work at Durham University, Director of Durham's Global Centre for Contextual Safeguarding, and co-convener of the European Social Work Research Association special interest group on Social Work and Adolescents. She is a Global Ashoka Fellow, a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a member of the Ofsted Insights and Evidence (Social Care) External Reference Group, the Youth Endowment Fund Children's Services strategic reference group, the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit Strategic Board and the Churchill Fellowship Advisory Council.

Carlene has researched young people's experiences of community and group-based violence since 2008 and has advocated for comprehensive approaches that keep them safe in public

places, schools, and peer groups. Carlene coined the term Contextual Safeguarding in 2015 to describe a vision for improving safeguarding responses to young people at risk of harm beyond their family homes. She directs a multi-disciplinary research centre, and associated research programme, to convert this vision into safeguarding responses and policy frameworks concerned with extra-familial harm in the UK and internationally. She is committed to building interagency approaches to protecting young people that are characterised by care, and has used Contextual Safeguarding as one route to exploring what this means in both policy and practice.

Wendy Ghaffar – HMI, Specialist Adviser Ofsted

Wendy is the specialist adviser for cross-remit safeguarding in Ofsted based in the social care policy team. She is a qualified and registered social worker with a Master's in Child Protection and over 35 years of experience in the field of child protection. Wendy has worked for local authorities, a national voluntary childcare organisation, the nationwide children's research centre and in social work education. She worked as an HMI for 5 years before taking up her current post. Wendy has a lead role in developing the methodology for JTAs and authoring thematic reports. Themes she has covered include child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, the neglect of older children, multi-agency responses to children's mental health and serious youth violence. She took a lead role in the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. Wendy sits on a range of advisory boards and works with both the Department for Education and the Home Office on a range of issues. Wendy provides cross-remit advice, guidance and training to the schools, further education and skills, early years and social care remits within Ofsted, and to National and Regional Directors and His Majesty's Chief Inspector.

Jenny Coles – Member of National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

Jenny Coles is a qualified as a social worker and has been a senior manager in Local Authority Children's Services since 1997. She has worked extensively in children's safeguarding, looked after children and quality assurance, and has also managed integrated youth and youth justice services, education and Special Educational Needs and Disability. Jenny became Director of Children's Services Hertfordshire County Council in 2010 and retired in August 2021. Jenny was President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) from April 2020 – April 2021.

Jenny is currently a member of the National Children's Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and also works as a DfE Improvement Advisor. She is an independent chairperson & scrutineer for 2 Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships and is a trustee for 2 national charities, Coram children's charity and Foundations the What Works Centre for children and families.

Jimmy Belmar – Senior Investigating Officer, Project Medusa, Merseyside Police

Jimmy is the Senior Investigating Officer for Project Medusa, Merseyside Police's response to Tackling County Lines. He was a Police Officer for 30 years and retired in 2020. He spent 27 years as a Detective, 16 of those working in Serious & Organised Crime Teams impacting on Organised Crime Groups impacting right across the UK. As part of Jimmy's Medusa team, he set up Operation Stonehaven. Stonehaven utilises partners to provide interventions and diversionary activities preventing young people from being criminally exploited.

Dez Homles – Strategic Director for Practice & Programmes at National Children's Bureau, and Director of Research in Practice

Dez is the Strategic Director for Practice & Programmes at [National Children's Bureau](#), and is also Director of [Research in Practice](#), a not-for-profit organisation that since 1996 has been supporting those who work with children, families and adults to use evidence in their practice and leadership.

Her practice experience is largely within youth offending services and early help. She is particularly interested in adolescence, transitions, risk and participatory practice.

Dez has led Research in Practice's work on adolescent and Transitional Safeguarding, and has recently published two books in this area.

Until recently, Dez was Programme Director for the Tackling Child Exploitation programme ([TCE](#)); she also chairs the [Contextual Safeguarding](#) UK Advisory Group and is a Visiting Fellow at University of East Anglia.

Dez chairs the Advisory Group for [The Staff College](#), which develops leadership capacity across local authority children's services, and sits on a number of Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) policy committees and research advisory boards.

Dez was a member of the Evidence Group, supporting the [Review of Children's Social Care](#), and is also a trustee of [Family Action](#), a large charity providing practical, emotional and financial support to families who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation.

In 2024, Dez was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by University of Sussex.

Antonia Ogundayisi – Race Equity Associate, Youth Endowment Fund

Antonia Ogundayisi on LinkedIn

@AntoniaOgun on Twitter

Antonia is a passionate and energetic social care leader committed to adapting systems within social work to achieve positive change. With a career deeply rooted in advocating for children, young people, and communities, Antonia has predominantly worked within children's social care, fostering, youth work, youth justice and serious youth violence settings across various roles. She has served as a leader in both the voluntary and statutory social care sectors, co-designing and overseeing anti-racist, child-focused practice models informed by a psychosocial and systemic perspective.

Currently, Antonia works as a Service Manager for Anti-Racist Practice within children's social care, where she leads strategic initiatives to embed anti-racist practices, policies, and equitable systems for Black and ethnically diverse children. Antonia has contributed to local, regional, and national panels, sharing good practices that promote effective system change.

A firm believer in transformation, Antonia is passionate about contributing to the development of this resource, as she deeply believes in collective action to propel positive change. She advocates for ethics-led leadership, asserting that by integrating research and practice, children, families, and communities can have greater faith in the social care system's ability to effectively center and respond to their needs. Through this research, Antonia hopes to empower leaders and practitioners to embed anti-racist, trauma-informed, and child-centered practices in their work.

Debbie Ariyo – CEO, Afruca

Debbie Ariyo OBE is Chief Executive of AFRUCA, a UK charity she founded in 2001 to address child safeguarding and child trafficking issues in African diaspora communities and provide

support services for children and families and rehabilitate those affected. She has specialist expertise in addressing socio-cultural factors affecting the protection and safeguarding of children of Black and African origins in the UK and Europe. She is a specialist in forced migration and human trafficking and has vast experience of designing and implementing diaspora anti-trafficking engagement programmes and service provision for those who have lived experience of these issues. She works in different capacities as a researcher, an advocate, a court expert witness, a trainer, a newspaper columnist, a philanthropist and a public speaker. Debbie chairs the BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET) which she founded in 2019 to help promote racial equity, diversity and inclusion in the UK anti-trafficking sector.

Hannah Woodhouse – Executive Director Children Services (DCS) Bristol City Council

Hannah Woodhouse is the Director of Children's Services at Bristol City Council, a role she assumed in February 2024. Born and raised in the South-West, Hannah now resides in Monmouthshire, South Wales with her family.

Hannah's career in public service spans over two decades, showcasing her dedication to education and children's services:

- 1999: Began at the Department for Education and Employment, including secondments to Cabinet Office/No.10 to lead on Welfare to Work, to private office of a Lords Minister.
- 2002-4: Team Leader London Keys to Success and Key Boroughs for the London Challenge team.
- 2004-2006: Senior Policy Analyst at New Zealand Ministry of Education
- 2006: Deputy Director for 14-19 Funding and Targets Policy, DfE
- 2010: Service Director Strategy and Commissioning at Cambridgeshire County Council
- 2013: Managing Director for Central South Wales School Improvement Service
- 2017: Deputy Director, regional schools commissioner team South-West
- 2019: Regional Schools Commissioner South-West
- 2022: Regional Director for South-West
- 2024: Director of Children's Services at Bristol City Council

As Regional Director for the South-West from September 2022 to January 2024, Hannah was responsible for working across children's social care, SEND, schools, and area-based programmes to improve outcomes for children, families, and learners.

In her current role as Director of Children's Services (DCS) at Bristol City Council, Hannah is responsible for the statutory functions of children's social care and education within the local authority. This includes overseeing services for vulnerable children, fostering and adoption, early help, and educational support. As DCS, she plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety, well-being, and educational outcomes of all children and young people in Bristol. Hannah's experience in education policy, children's services, and national and regional leadership positions her well to lead Bristol's children's services and drive improvements in outcomes for the city's young people.

Florence Kroll CBE – Director of Children's Services, Royal Borough of Greenwich

Florence has been the Director of Children's services in the Royal Borough of Greenwich since 2016. She qualified as a social worker in 1991 and has worked for nearly 40 years in services for children, young people, adults and families within the children's and justice sector always with a

strong focus on social justice, inclusion, multi-disciplinary and whole family approaches, prevention and early support.

Her previous leadership roles between 2006 and 2014 in Hackney and Kent include director roles responsible for strategy, commissioning and service delivery in Youth Offending, Early Help, Family support, children's centres, youth hubs, inclusion services and pupil referral units. She was instrumental in developing Young Hackney an integrated model of youth work and family support in the community and in schools.

Florence values her role in Greenwich and is committed to inclusive and compassionate leadership and multi-agency working that provides the opportunities to shape services and strive for the best outcomes and experiences for children.

Florence is involved in work across London and currently chairs the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) and the London Adolescent Safeguarding Overview Board (LASOB) a subgroup of the London Safeguarding Children Partnership. She also co-chairs with the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), Your Choice a Pan London innovation programme which is being evaluated as part of a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) supported by the Youth Endowment Foundation (YEF). Your Choice utilises CBT and activity-based approaches, building emotional and mental wellbeing with children at risk of offending.

Gail Gibbons – Head of Change – Children's Services & Health, Youth Endowment Fund

Gail is Head of Change for Children's Services & Neighbourhoods at the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), where she is responsible for sector engagement activity and partnership development. A social worker by profession, Gail has over twenty five years' experience of working in the public sector – mainly in the fields of mental health, young people, policy development and commissioning. Immediately prior to joining YEF, she was CEO of Sheffield Futures – a young people's charity providing specialist support and mentoring for young people in Sheffield and the surrounding region. She has also held senior management roles in the local authority children's services sector, and has been an ACEVO Fellow and a Fellow of Practice at Oxford University's Government Outcomes Lab.

Richard Bottomley – Headteacher, Bradford AP Academy

Having worked in the mainstream sector for over 15 years, Richard joined Bradford AP Academy in 2017, becoming Headteacher in 2021. Bradford AP Academy is the provider of 6th day provision for permanently excluded secondary schools in Bradford. They successfully applied to run an Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce, following the Covid lockdown. This has now evolved to become a local authority run taskforce from April of 2025, with the vast majority of colleagues deployed into the group. This supports both permanently excluded students and those vulnerable to permanent exclusion across all the three tiers.

Steve Harrison – Project Manager, Another Way, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Partnership

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Steve manages Another Way, a Youth Endowment Funded pilot of focused deterrence in Nottingham. Before joining the Violence Reduction Partnership he worked for Nottingham City Council in a variety of roles that included ASB Manager, Cohesion Manager, Neighbourhood

Manager and with responsibilities for Prevent, hate crime, customer care, performance management and information governance. Prior to 2007 he worked for a number of London Boroughs, most noticeably Lewisham where he managed the Community Safety Team. Underpinning all these roles has been problem solving and partnership working. Along the way he picked up an MA in Public Policy from the University of Nottingham. He also cleans pans to a high standard at a food kitchen.