

POLICY BRIEF

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

08 January 2020



The information contained within this Brief is correct at the time of publication (Monday 23 December 2019).

HEADLINES

- Conservatives win a majority of 365 MPs.
- Government ministers remain in post and continue to run their departments - cabinet reshuffle expected in February 2020.
- [Independent review](#) backs higher National Living Wage concluding that there is room for exploring a higher NLW in the UK up to two-thirds of the median wage.
- [Funding will be available to partner organisations](#) to help vulnerable people claim Universal Credit. (Announced November 2019).
- Councils to see an [increase in funding](#) to deliver free childcare places to support children and parents. (Announced October 2019).
- The UK threat level from terrorism has been reduced from Severe to Substantial - meaning an attack is likely. (This is still the case following the attack on 29 Nov 2019).

A Queen's Speech was delivered on the 14 October 2019, however this was in the previous parliamentary period and has now been superseded by an updated Queen's Speech delivered on 19 December 2019. The speech outlined the Government's intentions over the next Parliament, setting out nearly 30 bills as domestic priorities. The headline announcements include;

- Priority to expedite the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill - implement in domestic law the Withdrawal Agreement which has been agreed between the UK and the EU.
- NHS Funding Bill and NHS Long Term Plan;
 - National Health Service's multi-year funding settlement, agreed earlier this year, will be enshrined in law.
 - New visa to ensure qualified doctors, nurses and health professionals have fast-track entry to the United Kingdom.
 - Hospital car parking charges will be removed for those in greatest need.
- Immigration and Social Co-ordination Bill;
 - Points-based immigration system.
- Employment Bill;
 - Strengthen workers' ability to get redress for poor treatment by creating a new, single enforcement body.
 - Build on existing employment law with measures that protect those in low-paid work and the gig economy.
- Increase in the National Insurance threshold and an increase in the National Living Wage.
- Measures to encourage flexible working, to introduce the entitlement to leave for unpaid carers and to help people save for later life.
- Support home ownership, including by making homes available at a discount for local first-time buyers.
- New sentencing laws will ensure the most serious violent offenders, including terrorists, serve longer in custody.
- New laws will require schools, police, councils and health authorities to work together to prevent serious crime.

- Domestic Abuse Bill - will establish a statutory definition of domestic abuse, including emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour and economic abuse.
- Publish a National Infrastructure Strategy and prioritise investment in infrastructure and world-leading science research and skills and increase tax credits for research and development, establishment of a National Skills Fund.
- New laws will accelerate the delivery of gigabit capable broadband.
- Target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- Environmental Bill will enshrine in law environmental principles and legally-binding targets, including for air quality.
- Repeal the Fixed-term Parliaments Act.

There was no further information in relation to education or children's social care than has not already been previously announced, however further detail on these areas and the content of the Queen's Speech can be found here;

[Queen's Speech detail](#)

GOVERNMENT POLICY, LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

[Department for Education](#). Department for Education offering loans to housing developers to boost new house and school building momentum. £20 million per school would be made available to builders. The Developer Loans for Schools programme, launched in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, will give parents even more choice of a good school place through a pilot, running from 2019 to 2021. (Announced October 2019).

[Department for Education](#). Academies and sixth form colleges across England can now bid for a share of more than £400 million to transform facilities, improve school buildings and create more good school places. The multi-million-pound annual fund can be used by academies and sixth form colleges to expand classrooms, upgrade facilities such as sports halls or science labs, and address issues with the general wear and tear of school buildings. This year applications will be subject to new criteria which will favour bids from schools with good governance and organised finances – including showing restraint on executive salaries. (Announced October 2019).

The Education Committee published a [report](#) on the support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Committee concluded that poor implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 has put local authorities under pressure, leaving families in crisis. This supports the [evidence](#) to the Committee that the services for children with special education needs have reached a tipping point and that system reform is needed alongside additional funding.

[Department for Education](#). New government support for adoptive families - further funding for the Adoption Support Fund ensuring every family that needs it will be able to get therapeutic support until 2021. The commitment builds on the £130m already invested through the fund, which has benefitted over 40,000 families. (Announced October 2019).

Department for Education. [SEND tribunal trial: letter to children's services directors](#). Extending the current special educational needs and disability (SEND) tribunal trial to August 2020.

Department for Education. [Councils to see an increase in funding to deliver free childcare places to support children and parents](#). Councils across England will receive a funding boost to deliver free childcare places, enabling parents to work more flexibly and supporting children's early development. (Announced October 2019).

Department for Education. [£155 million funding for colleges and sixth forms to deliver engineering, construction and hospitality subjects.](#) Next year young people aged 16-19 will benefit from a £155 million cash injection so they can access high-quality courses that will set them on a path to rewarding careers with higher wages. The funding forms part of the additional £400 million - announced in August for school sixth forms and colleges for 2020-21. (Announced November 2019).

OPEN CONSULTATIONS

Department for Education. [Early years foundation stage reforms.](#) Government are seeking views on proposed changes to the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. Consultation closes 31st January 2020.

Plymouth City Council are consulting on behalf of schools on the admissions arrangements for 2021-22. Consultation closes on 19 January 2020.
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/schoolseducationchildcareskillsandemployability/schooladmissions/consultationonschooladmissionarrangements20212022>