

POLICY BRIEF

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

02 December 2020



The information within this Brief is correct at the time of approval for publication and contains relevant announcements made by Government and its departments and regulators since the last ECSC Scrutiny committee on 19 October 2020.

[Have your say on post-16 level 2 and below study](#)

[A call for evidence](#) has been launched seeking views on how to ensure post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below – excluding GCSEs – can support more people to progress into further study or employment. Closing date 31 January 2021.

Date of publication	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<p>Full range of guidance that has recently been updated to reflect latest government changes</p>	<p>The following guidance document has been updated to reflect the new National Restrictions.</p> <p>Education and childcare settings: New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020</p> <p>How New National Restrictions to control the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) impact education, childcare and children's social care settings.</p> <p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early years and childcare 2. Out-of-school activities and wraparound childcare 3. Schools 4. Children's social care, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people 5. Further education and apprenticeships 6. Higher education <p>The following targeted guidance was updated in October to reflect the move into the tiered 'alert' system, but has since be updated to reflect the new national restrictions.</p> <p>Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p> <p>Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak</p> <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): Education and childcare</p> <p>What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p> <p>Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings</p> <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children's social care services</p> <p>Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p> <p>Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak</p>
<p>Published 19 October 2020</p>	<p>Evaluation of regional adoption agencies</p> <p>Evaluation of regional adoption agencies (RAAs): second report (2019 to 2020). This reviews the progress and early impact of RAAs up to early 2020.</p> <p><i>(Report circulated to Scrutiny Members on 21 October 2020)</i></p>

Published 23 October 2020	<p>Next stage of post-16 qualifications overhaul gets under way</p> <p>The next step in the government's drive to boost the quality of post-16 qualifications has been announced by the Education Secretary. New measures will aim to boost the quality of, and to streamline qualifications, so that students and employers get the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow.</p>
Press release - 26 October 2020	<p>Action to help prevent vulnerable young people from becoming homeless</p> <p>New guidance for councils has been published to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless. The good practice guidance recommends how council housing departments and children's services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living • those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it • a quick, safe and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless.
Press release - 26 October 2020	<p>Protections for working parents eligible for childcare support</p> <p>Eligibility extended for parents eligible for 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare offers. The Government has confirmed that from Sunday 01 November, eligible working parents who receive support through the Government's new Job Support Scheme (JSS) and extended Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue to receive their childcare entitlements, including the 30 hours offer and Tax-Free Childcare, even if their income levels fall below the threshold temporarily whilst on these schemes.</p>
Press release 08 November 2020	<p>New winter package to provide further support for children and families</p> <p>Councils given new funding for vulnerable households. The funding will be ring-fenced, with at least 80% earmarked for support with food and bills, and will cover the period to the end of March 2021. Local Authorities will receive the funding at the beginning of December 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter • Holiday Activities and Food programme to be expanded, covering Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021 • Healthy Start payments set to rise from £3.10 to £4.25 a week from April 2021 • Suite of measures represents long-term plan to help tackle poor health, hunger and education.
Published 09 November 2020	<p>Child protection at heart of courts review</p> <p>A review launched today will consider how the current approach to decisions on parental access made in the family courts is impacting child safety, in the next step for government's wider plans to reform family courts and bring in greater protections for domestic abuse victims. This follows a package of reforms earlier in the year to overhaul how family courts deal with domestic abuse cases – providing extra protections in courtrooms for victims, stronger powers to block abusers repeatedly dragging victims back to court and a new investigative court process to reduce conflict. The review is expected to report back next year and forms part of the government's long-term plan, announced in June, to better protect victims in the family courts.</p>

Published 11 November 2020	<p>Vulnerable children and young people survey (Updated)</p> <p>Summary of local authority survey in England to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on children's social care. Updated to include waves 1 – 12.</p>
Published 17 November 2020	<p>Government leads national drive to protect victims of child abuse</p> <p>The Home Office has joined forces with charities including the NSPCC, Barnardo's and The Children's Society to launch a new campaign to protect victims of child abuse. The month-long campaign, 'Something's Not Right', encourages young people to recognise different forms of abuse, report it and get help. The campaign will see animated adverts aimed at secondary school pupils aged 13+, running across Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. Young people will be directed to a dedicated page on the NSPCC service Childline where they can access information and seek support.</p>
Ofsted Announcements	
Published 04 November 2020	<p>Education plans from September 2020</p> <p>Guidance for education providers about Ofsted's phased return to inspection. Added information about how Ofsted will carry out our work during the national restrictions starting on 5 November.</p> <p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. About the interim period 2. National restrictions from 5 November 3. Information for early years and childcare providers 4. Information for state-funded schools 5. Information for non-association independent schools 6. Information for further education and skills providers 7. Information for local areas on special educational needs and disabilities arrangements. <p>Social care plans from September 2020</p> <p>Guidance for children's social care providers about Ofsted's phased return to inspection.</p> <p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Details about the interim period 2. National restrictions from 5 November 3. The social care common inspection framework 4. Inspection of local authority children's services.
Press release 06 November 2020	<p>New Ofsted report highlights need to get matching right</p> <p>Ofsted's study highlights the importance of getting foster matches right for children's futures, as well as keeping foster carers in the system.</p>
Published 10 November 2020	<p>COVID-19 series: briefing on children's social care, October 2020</p> <p>Evidence from assurance visits to social care providers and focused visits to local authorities between 08 September and 15 October. The main findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better multi-agency working has often been a positive consequence of the pandemic, especially between education and LAs.

- Concerns about sufficiency, placement disruption and children entering care in an unplanned way have increased during COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions.
- Care leavers' personal advisers have shown strong commitment to them throughout the pandemic.
- Pressures on the family courts significantly impacted LAs' ability to issue care proceedings and to protect children. The backlog of public law cases has also made it harder to return children home or move them out of care.
- Contact between children and their families has largely been managed sensitively, in line with COVID-19 restrictions on a local and national level.
- Leaders did not always have a clear strategy to know which children known to social care should be attending school in person or to monitor attendance.
- There were differences in children's and young people's access to technology and therefore in their ability to engage in remote learning, access the job market or keep in touch with friends and family.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) often already did not have enough capacity to meet children's needs, and this worsened during the pandemic.
- LAs appear to have made little use of the temporary flexibilities in the regulations.

[COVID-19 series: briefing on early years, October 2020](#)

Evidence from research interviews with 208 registered early years providers and maintained nursery schools between 05 and 16 October. Main findings include:

- Many children have left EY settings since the first national restrictions and have not returned.
- Almost all providers said that the pandemic had significantly impacted the learning and development of children who had left and subsequently returned.
- They were particularly concerned about children's personal, social and emotional development. Some children had returned less confident and more anxious. In some cases, children had also become less independent, for example returning to their setting using dummies or back in nappies having previously been toilet trained.
- Providers reported that children who continued to attend their setting or who were well supported at home had made good progress in their learning.
- Many providers have given some aspects of the curriculum (what they wanted children to learn and be able to do) a greater focus as a result of children's experiences of the pandemic.
- Most said they have put more emphasis on personal, social and emotional development because they felt that children's skills had regressed.
- Many providers have made changes to the resources and routines in their settings and most have increased their teaching of personal hygiene

[COVID-19 series: briefing on schools, October 2020](#)

Evidence from visits to schools between 29 September and 23 October 2020. The briefing note reports on 380 Ofsted visits and is the second briefing to be produced with another due to be published in December. The main findings include:

- Variability in the extent to which pupils have returned to school this term: not all pupils have come back following the first national lockdown. And while, in many schools, attendance rates for those who have come back are comparable to normal for this time of year, in others it is now being affected by groups of pupils having to self-isolate.
- Leaders have said that they were making some adaptations to their curriculum, based on practical considerations, or as a result of pupils having lost learning while not at school, or often both.
- Leaders also talked about the many challenges they were facing in keeping their schools safe and open. Leaders said that their pupils were generally happy to be

<p>Press release 12 November 2020</p> <p>Press release 12 November 2020</p>	<p>back, and had settled in well. But they were also clear about the changes they had seen in some pupils, including poorer physical and mental health.</p> <p>COVID -19 series: briefing on local areas' SEND provision, October 2020</p> <p>Evidence from 6 visits to local areas, looking at their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision between 5 and 14 October 2020. The main findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of the families and survey respondents found the first national COVID-19 restrictions challenging and said coping got harder as time went on. Parents and carers who normally relied on established routines, informal and family support networks and specialist services for their children struggled without them. • Some spoke about their child's regression, their own emerging mental health difficulties and the challenges of explaining restrictions to their children, or real concerns about the risks the virus posed to their child's health. • Some children and young people had positive experiences, at least in some respects. Those who remained in education throughout were reported to have benefited from the experience and often flourished with smaller class sizes and more support. Others enjoyed being at home and made progress. • Some area leaders described their ambition to put children and young people with SEND and their families at their heart of strategic planning. • Some practitioners also described steps taken to ensure service continuity. Families in all six areas spoke about the benefits of bringing multi-agency practitioners together online. • Some services, such as short breaks, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, were more difficult or impossible to deliver at distance. There were also concerns that not all families were able to access online provision equally because they did not have the technology or because English was not their first language. • In all six local areas, some families reported receiving little or even no contact from practitioners. Some children did not receive learning support and some were not able to access health and therapeutic services. <p>Ofsted announces new early years inspection arrangements</p> <p>A new approach to inspecting early years providers will give good and outstanding providers more consistency while prioritising providers rated less than good.</p> <p>Capacity in foster care stalling, despite rising demand</p> <p>The number of fostering places and carers only increased slightly this year, despite demand being at its highest, new data shows. Ofsted's annual fostering statistics show there has been little change in capacity, adding to concerns about the difficulty in finding suitable care for the most vulnerable children in an over-stretched system.</p>
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