

POLICY BRIEF

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

15 February 2023



The information within this Brief is correct at the time of approval for publication and contains relevant policy announcements made by Government and its departments and regulators.

Consultations and Calls for Evidence

Two consultations have been released in relation to the new Children's Social Care Implementation Strategy which is also open to consultation. Further details can be found below (all close 11 May 2023).

Date of announcement /publication	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Government Policy / Legislative Announcements:	
02 February 2023	<p>Long-term strategy launched to fix children's social care</p> <p>The government have published a Children's Social Care Implementation Strategy to transform the current care system and focus on more early support for families, reducing the need for crisis response at a later stage.</p> <p>The plan responds to recommendations made by three independent reviews by Josh MacAlister, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel into the tragic murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).</p> <p>Measures announced today in the strategy, Stable Homes, Built on Love, include:</p> <p>Introducing more effective, joined-up family help for those that are struggling.</p> <p>Up to 12 local areas will get over £45m to test a new approach to Family Help to provide increased, evidence-based support for families to overcome issues to prevent problems from escalating. In a welcoming and non-judgemental way, the new service will help families with issues such as domestic abuse or poor mental health, giving them access to local support with the focus on the help they need rather than bureaucratic boundaries and assessments between services and professionals.</p> <p>Where a child is at risk of harm, experts will intervene swiftly and decisively to protect them.</p> <p>A new Child Protection Lead Practitioner role will have advanced, specialist training, and will work in a fully joined up way with other services such as the police, to better identify and respond to significant harm. The change will mean services work more effectively to protect children from harms that happen outside of the home, such as criminal exploitation and serious violence.</p>

	<p>Harnessing the value of family networks by supporting the kinship care system.</p> <p>There will be a focus on improved support and reducing barriers to kinship care, including investing £9 million in a kinship care training and support offer for all kinship carers. The government will explore the case for a new financial allowance, possible additional workplace entitlements and options for an extension of legal aid for kinship carers who become Special Guardians or who hold Child Arrangement Orders.</p> <p>Transforming the experiences of children in care and care leavers, by prioritising children in care living in homes close to their family, friends, communities and schools.</p> <p>In addition to the recruitment programme and the above inflation increase to allowances, the government is investing £30m in family finding, befriending and mentoring programmes to support children in care and care leavers to find and maintain loving relationships. The government will also increase the leaving care allowance from £2,000 to £3,000 from April this year, an above inflation increase to help them set up home independently. For care leavers undertaking apprenticeships, there will be an increase to the bursary available from £1000 to £3,000.</p> <p>Expanding and strengthening the children’s social care workforce.</p> <p>Local authorities will be supported to recruit up to 500 new child and family social worker apprentices and there will be consultation on proposals to reduce over-reliance on agency social workers. The government will also introduce a new Early Career Framework for social workers that will make sure that social workers have the knowledge and skills they need to support and protect children. A consultation on the workforce proposals can be found here.</p> <p>Setting clearer direction for everyone who works in the system, through a new Children’s Social Care National Framework and Dashboard.</p> <p>The National Framework, published for consultation, sets out clear outcomes that should be achieved across all local authorities to improve the lives of children and families, raising the quality of practice across the country.</p>
02 February 2023	<p>Children’s social care: CMA recommendations accepted by UK government</p> <p>The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched a market study into children’s social care in March 2021 due to concerns over a lack of availability of placements and high prices.</p> <p>As part of its wider strategy to improve the sector (see above), the Department for Education (DfE) has committed to implement these recommendations to ensure long-term reform, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing regional bodies to support local authorities in obtaining suitable placements for children: These bodies will be able to engage better with placement providers, such as care homes and foster agencies, to help make sure the right placements are available when and where children need them. They will also be trialled and evaluated to make sure they are fit for purpose.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing a financial oversight regime: Establish an oversight regime to assess the financial health of care home providers that are most difficult to replace, and alert authorities if a failure is likely. • Reviewing regulation relating to the placement of children: Create an expert working group to review all existing legislation and regulation regarding children's social care, and develop a common set of standards for fostering, children's homes and supported accommodation.
04 January 2023	<p><u>Prime Minister sets ambition of maths to 18 in speech</u></p> <p>In his first speech of 2023, the Prime Minister set out his priorities for the year ahead and ambition for a better future for Britain. The PM committed to taking the necessary action to deliver for the long term on issues such as low numeracy rates. As part of this, he set a new ambition of ensuring that all school pupils in England study some form of maths to the age of 18.</p>
05 January 2023	<p><u>Careers boost for young people</u></p> <p>Primary school pupils are to benefit from a new careers programme that will encourage them to think about future jobs early, whilst nurturing aspirations and challenging stereotypes.</p> <p>From 1 January, young people will also benefit from strengthened careers advice through a change in the law that will see all year 8 - 13 pupils have at least six opportunities to meet a range of providers of technical education.</p> <p>The primary school scheme will be rolled out across the 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) including Plymouth and delivers on a commitment in the Schools White Paper.</p>
Ofsted Announcements:	
02 December 2022	<p><u>A new judgement for care leavers</u></p> <p>Following consultation, Ofsted is introducing a new, separate judgement to the framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) specifically about the experiences and progress of care leavers. Inspections will consider whether local authorities are making good decisions for care leavers, and what they are doing to support them into adulthood and the new judgement will be introduced in January 2023, once all local authorities have had at least one ILACS inspection.</p>
13 December 2022	<p><u>Ofsted Annual Report: Pandemic recovery slowed by workforce crisis in children's education and care</u></p> <p>This year's Ofsted Annual Report describes the extent to which education and children's social care have recovered in the wake of the pandemic. It finds that, while there is much to be commended, ensuring this generation of children and young people get the education, training, care and opportunities they deserve remains a work in progress.</p>

For information:	
15 December 2022	<p data-bbox="406 197 1157 230">Expert panel calls for stronger child protection measures</p> <p data-bbox="406 235 1428 454">The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has published its third annual report. The independent panel of experts reviews serious child safeguarding incidents - when a child dies or suffers serious harm, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. The new report shows the panel received 379 serious incident notifications in 2021, which includes over 150 children who tragically died.</p> <p data-bbox="406 495 1428 566">The panel is calling for the government to urgently release its plans to reform children's social care and to strengthen the child protection system.</p>