



Department for Education

Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families

Helen Hayes MP
Chair, Education Committee
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
SW1A 0AA

By email: educom@parliament.uk

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Thank you for your letter dated 24 March, and for inviting me to give evidence to the committee's inquiry on children's social care on 18 March.

I welcomed the opportunity to discuss the government's important reforms in this area with the Committee, and I am pleased to provide the following responses to the questions raised in your letter.

Dr Caroline Johnson MP asked what the Department is doing to ensure that medical professionals are included in child protection meetings and are listened to when they raise safeguarding concerns (Q451).

We are determined to strengthen multi-agency working to keep children safe. We expect statutory safeguarding partners (local authorities, integrated care boards and police forces) to establish new, multi-agency child protection teams (MACPT) and nominate a minimum membership, including registered health practitioners. We have set this out in both our Families First Partnership (FFP) national reform guidance (published on 20 March) and in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

The FFP programme guide includes examples of health services and practitioners that could be included in MACPTs (such as paediatricians with expertise in child protection, forensic physicians, and school and/or public health nurses). The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill also includes an information sharing duty that provides a clear legal basis to share information across agencies for the purposes of safeguarding and promotion of welfare, alongside provision to enable the specification of a consistent identifier for children.

Darren Paffey MP asked how the Department will monitor and review the impact of the measures in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to reform the social care market, and when the Department will provide the Committee with an update on the impact of the reforms (Q455).

Our package of children's social care placement market reform measures will rebalance the market, improve competition, regulation and the commissioning of placements, shine a light on the levels of profit being made and bring greater visibility to the prices local authorities are paying.

We are developing a data programme which will increase transparency and enhance our understanding of how the market is operating, giving us more intelligence about the volume and price of placements in the market. The introduction of the financial oversight scheme will give us greater information about the largest and most difficult to replace children's social care providers, and allow for an accurate, real-time assessment of the financial risk of 'difficult to replace' providers.

We expect reforms of this nature to take a number of years to have an impact. I am of course happy to discuss this again with the committee once the reforms have had the opportunity to take effect. We will closely monitor the data as outlined above, and will not hesitate to use our new power to cap the profits of providers if profiteering persists.

Dr Caroline Johnson MP asked how many officials working in the Department for Education are kinship carers and are likely to benefit from the new entitlement to kinship leave, and the cost to the Department of providing this (Q473).

We do not currently hold data on the number of kinship carers within the department. As the department's Kinship Leave Policy was only launched on 31 October 2024, we do not yet have comprehensive statistics.

We have estimated the likely future uptake and approximate cost of paid kinship leave, based on the prevalence of kinship roles in the working-age population, and using data from relevant charities and employers. DfE has over 7,000 staff, and we have set aside £60,000 per year to fund this paid leave. Employees can take up to 52 weeks of kinship leave: eligible employees are entitled to their normal rate of pay for 28 weeks, a reduced rate of pay for a further 11 weeks, with the remaining 13 weeks being unpaid. On average, the £60,000 we have set aside would enable two colleagues to take the full entitlement each year, although in practice staff may take this leave for varying lengths of time and we do not have a cap on numbers.

Darren Paffey MP asked how many inspections of supported accommodation providers have been undertaken since the registration deadline in October 2023, how many remain to be done, and when the Department expects all inspections to be completed (Q483).

Regular inspections began as planned in September 2024, and Ofsted must inspect providers within three years of their registration. Providers registered before 1 April 2024, of which there are 258, must have their first full inspection by the end of March 2027. Ofsted have already completed 50 full inspections and expect to complete 500 inspections in 2025/26, including any required re-inspections.

Ofsted have been balancing completing routine inspections whilst also prioritising registrations for providers. They expect to be focusing their resources on registrations for the foreseeable future (2025-26 financial year), while increasing the number of inspections they carry out.

Manuela Perteghella MP asked whether the Department will increase personal budgets for families with disabled children (Q498).

In the development of a child's Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, a local authority may decide that a personal budget is appropriate. Funding for EHC plans is provided to local authorities through the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). All local authorities are receiving an increase in funding in 2025 to 2026 through the National Funding Formula, and the total high needs budget for 2025 to 2026 will be £11.9 billion. DfE is not responsible for setting individual personal budgets, as this is at the discretion of the local authority.

Jess Asato MP asked whether the Department was satisfied that the proposed mandatory reporting duty in the Crime and Policing Bill was robust enough and whether the sector was prepared for the introduction of the new duty (Q505 and Q507).

The mandatory reporting duty in the Crime and Policing Bill delivers the intentions of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's mandatory reporting recommendation. The purpose of such a duty is to address the under-reporting of child sexual abuse, and disincentivise future institutional failures in addressing abuse. We are introducing a legal requirement for anyone undertaking relevant activity in England, including teachers or healthcare professionals, to report child sexual abuse. We expect the duty to come into force 12 months after the Bill receives Royal Assent, and we will be working with the Home Office ahead of the duty coming into force to ensure successful implementation.

During the evidence session, you asked what engagement the department has had with the Department for Work and Pensions on the impact of the Government's welfare reforms on children and on child poverty (Q514-517). Your letter also asked for my views on the reforms and what assessment has been made of the impact of the reforms on children, including children in care and care leavers.

The reforms are designed to ensure a welfare system that is fit for purpose and fair. It includes investing £1bn to give people the best possible chance in life, with tailored support that can be adapted to meet their changing circumstances, including their changing health.

There are nearly one million young people (16-24) not in Education Employment and Training, and the number is rising. The current benefit system is part of the problem - young people who are categorised as unable to work are usually left with no engagement or support. They face the prospect of being trapped in long-term economic inactivity before their career has even begun. The Government wants to change the benefit rules to support and underpin the Youth Guarantee, to ensure all

young people are learning or earning.

Detailed information on the government's impact assessment is available here: [Spring Statement 2025 health and disability benefit reforms - Impacts](#). A further programme of analysis to support development of the proposals in the Green Paper will be undertaken in the coming months. DWP is very keen to ensure that they hear from groups of young people who will be affected by these proposals before plans are finalised through the consultation which can be accessed here: [Pathways to Work consultation](#)

We have inherited unacceptably high levels of child poverty. The recently published figures now show that child poverty has increased by 900,000 since 2010, with 4.5 million children now living in poverty in the UK. The Child Poverty Taskforce, which is co-chaired by the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, is working closely with all Government Departments, particularly DWP. It is looking at four key themes of increasing incomes, reducing essential costs, increasing financial resilience, and better local support especially in the early years. We remain committed to improving the outcomes and experiences of care leavers through the Care Leaver Ministerial Board, which is co-chaired by the Secretary of State for Education and the Deputy Prime Minister. The board is asking each Department to consider how they can help us to develop the strongest possible offer for care leavers.

Support and mentoring for kinship carers

At the evidence session, I indicated that the Department funds peer-to-peer support groups and a package of training and support to kinship carers. I can confirm that this package of support is delivered by the charity Kinship, and not the Family Rights Group as indicated at the evidence session.

In addition to the above questions raised in your letter, I would like to provide some further information on the following areas, which were also discussed during my evidence session:

Corporate parenting

During the session, I offered to provide more information relating to the corporate parenting measures in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, including in relation to immigration and adult criminal justice. Our new measures will require all government departments and relevant public bodies in scope to be alert to matters which might negatively affect the wellbeing of children in care and care leavers, regardless of their immigration status.

Immigration functions are exempt because the Home Office is already subject to existing statutory duties to safeguard children through Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act. In addition, local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to accommodate all Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who arrive in their area. UASC are entitled to the same protections and support as any other Looked After Child and all local authorities must exercise their duties under the Children Act 1989 to all children and care leavers in their area,

regardless of immigration status.

We will continue to work with the Home Office on how we can improve the experience of looked after children and care leavers in the immigration, asylum and nationality system. For clarity, corporate parenting responsibilities do apply to all functions exercised by the Secretary of State for Justice, including both the prison and probation service.

Family Group Decision Making

During the session, we also discussed how local authorities can be informed by advice from specialist domestic abuse charities in their delivery of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).

I would like to reiterate my commitment to giving local authorities support to deliver their FGDM services effectively and safely for all. We will publish statutory guidance for local authorities outlining their duties regarding their FGDM offer, including with respect to safeguarding. We will also publish best practice guidance for local authorities and practitioners, to further support the safe delivery of FGDM. For both pieces of guidance, we will work with specialist organisations, including those with expertise in domestic abuse, to ensure local authorities have access to high-quality information which will help them keep families safe.

Thank you again for inviting me to the evidence session on 18 March. I am of course happy to continue to work with the committee as we introduce our reforms, and I look forward to receiving your inquiry report on children's social care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Janet Daby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families