

Consultation on Children's Social Care Reforms. Young Peoples version for Children and Young People's Partnership

Ambition 1: Family Help

All families and children need help sometimes. Families, neighbours and friends can usually help each other. Sometimes help might come from a teacher, doctor, nurse, or people like youth workers.

But sometimes families need more help than that. In future, these families will be supported by a new service called Family Help, so they can get the right help at the right time.

At the moment, when families need help from children's social care, they often go through lots of meetings with different people. We want to make it easier to get that help.

Children and families might also feel like the help they get is not what they need or they might feel that they have too many changes of adults working with them. We want that to change.

We plan to:

- make sure all children and families can get the right help at the right time, no matter what they need or where they come from
- make it easier for children and families to get help
- test a new way of giving help to families in up to 12 different parts of the country
- employ more adults, who do not always have to be social workers, to help children and families
- make changes to the help we give to disabled children including by reviewing how the law works
- make sure Family Help works for people who live in and come from all different places
- give better help to families that are experiencing problems linked to not having enough money

Ambition 2: Keeping children safe

All children should be kept safe from harm.

Most often parents do the job of keeping children safe. But sometimes parents have problems of their own that mean they find it hard to keep their children safe and healthy. Sometimes children are hurt by people from inside or outside their family.

In the future, social workers, nurses, doctors, police officers, teachers and lots of other people will work better together to keep children safe. They should talk to children, their parents and family members about how best to help.

Sometimes, grandparents, aunts, uncles, other family members and family friends can also help. We should do more to make sure this can happen.

Some children might need the help of a social worker with extra training and experience so they can make the best decisions about how to keep them safe.

If a child can't live with their parents because it is not safe, their social worker and the family court should speak to them and their family about where they will live.

The judge in the family court should listen to what everyone has to say. It's their job to make safe decisions for that child and their family. They should make a decision as quickly as they can.

We plan to:

- test a new way of keeping children safe in the same parts of the country that we are testing Family Help
- make sure social workers with lots of experience and training work with children and their families to keep them safe
- be clearer on how adults like teachers, doctors, nurses and the police should work together to keep children safe
- encourage adults who work in children's social care to make sure they listen more to children
- help parents and other adults close to children to understand what they need to do to keep them safe and healthy
- make changes so that children are kept safe from things that can hurt them outside of their home
- think about how teachers might have more of a role in keeping children safe, as they usually see and speak to children a lot
- improve how family courts work so that the decisions they need to make about children's lives are made quickly, and to make sure the courts work well with parents

Ambition 3: Supporting families to help children

Even with lots of help, sometimes parents are not able to keep children safe. When that happens, it is important that social workers talk to other family members about this.

This could be grandparents, aunts, uncles or other family members. It could also be family friends or other adults that children know well.

If children can't live with their parents, they should live with someone they already know, love and trust if it is possible and safe.

In children's social care we call this 'kinship care'.

If children need to live in kinship care, then their kinship carers should be given help to make that happen. That help might be money, or it could be things like help to get a child to and from school every day.

We want to give more help to children and kinship carers.

We plan to:

- tell local authorities that it is important to put family first, when it is safe
- ask local authorities to find and support family members so they can help children and parents to be safe and healthy, when they need it
- make sure children who can't live with their parents are asked if there is anyone that they already know and would want to live with
- ask local authorities to use their money differently, to help kinship carers and children
- test new ways of supporting kinship care and children with Family Network Support Packages in up to 19 different parts of the country – these packages are different types of help that local authorities can give to kinship carers, like helping them build an extra bedroom or giving them some extra money to pay for things a child needs
- offer training and help to all kinship carers in the country to help them look after children
- create a new 'kinship strategy' about how we support family members to help children, with more information about how we support children and kinship carers

Ambition 4: Make care better for children in care and care leavers

We want lots of support for children to stay with their families, but even with help for families, sometimes children need to come into care to keep them safe.

Some children in care live with foster carers and some live in a home with other children.

Sometimes, the home that children in care live in does not make them happy or keep them safe. Sometimes children in care move home too much and their home isn't close to their friends, family and school.

We need to make sure that every child in care has a safe and loving home where they are happy.

We want children to stay close to the people and places they know. This means government and local authorities need to work together to find more homes for children to live in.

We want to make sure children in care have loving people in their lives all the time. This could be brothers and sisters, other family members or friends.

We want to make sure children in care have everything they need to do well in school and learn new things. Everyone should make sure children in care are able to stay healthy and can see doctors or nurses if they need to.

If you are in care your local authority is your 'corporate parent'. This means they should act like any loving parent would and provide you with the best possible support and care.

If you are leaving care, you should continue to feel safe and loved. You should be able to stay living in your community in a safe home. You should be helped to go to university, get an apprenticeship or to get a job.

No one should ever feel ashamed or be treated differently because they are, or have been, in care. Every child in care and care leaver should be listened to – their wishes and feelings should be prioritised when making decisions about their lives.

We have 6 missions to improve all aspects of life for children in care and care leavers.

Mission 1

Social workers and other practitioners make sure children and young people can see and spend time with the people who love and matter most to them.

Mission 2

We want to have more people and organisations act like, or be, corporate parents.

Mission 3

We want to make sure there are enough good foster homes and children's homes for children to live in. We will do this by:

- increasing the number of foster homes across the whole country, so that children can stay nearer to their friends and family when they come into care
- building more children's homes in areas where there aren't enough, so children do not need to move so far from home

Mission 4

We want to make sure children in care are supported to do well in school or get good jobs, including older children aged 16 to 19 years old. We will do this by:

- creating more training and jobs for care leavers
- increasing how much money we give to care leavers who do an apprenticeship
- working with universities to support care leavers to go to university and to succeed and do well when they are at university
- offering more support in school and colleges such as working with a tutor
- giving more money to the Care Leaver Covenant which supports care leavers aged 16 to 25 with jobs

Mission 5

We will make sure more care leavers live in safe homes by:

- helping young people who leave care to stay living with their foster family or give help and support as they start to live on their own
- increasing the amount of money young people get when they leave care

Mission 6

We want to make sure adults working with children in care and care leavers know how to support them with their physical and mental health needs.

We will give people more training on this. We will make sure children in care and care leavers can see doctors or nurses more easily.

Ambition 5: Children have great social workers

Lots of children already have social workers. Social workers support children and families every day. Many children find their social worker is a big help in their life.

Some children with a social worker do not have such a good relationship with them or find their social worker changes too often so they can't get to know each other well.

We want every child who needs one to have a great social worker. They can change the lives of children and adults for the better.

We want all children who have a social worker to have a strong relationship with them. That means we want social workers to change jobs less often.

To make that happen, social workers need leaders and the government to support them more and they need to know how valued they are.

If you have a social worker, we want to make sure they spend enough time with you. We want you to feel like you can talk to them about anything and that they listen to you.

We plan to:

- increase the number of people becoming social workers
- help social workers stay working at the same place for longer – this will mean children do not have to tell their life stories lots of times
- reduce the amount of office work social workers do so they can spend more time with children and families
- give social workers more and better training
- celebrate social workers who are doing a good job so that everyone knows what an important job they do for children and families

Ambition 6: Improving the whole system for children and families

We do not think that everyone who works in children's social care always shares the same views about what it should do for children and families.

We want it to be clearer for children and families what social workers and other workers should do for them.

While we make these changes, we want to make sure we keep learning how to make the system better. We want to know we are getting it right for all children and families no matter where they live or who they live with.

This means we need to be better at understanding what is working and what is not working.

That means listening to children much more and including their views.

The government makes sure there are checks that children and families across the whole country are getting good services. They do this by having local authorities, children's homes and fostering agencies inspected.

When children and families are not getting what they need, we want those services to get better faster.

We plan to:

- create new guides for people working with children and families, and the people who are in charge of children's social care, about what they need to do for them
- listen more to children and young people
- listen more to parents, families, friends and the people that love children
- collect better information about the difference social care is making to children and families' lives
- make sure services improve more quickly when they are not good
- make sure the money given to local authorities to do their work is given fairly based on the needs of people living there