Help, protection, education: concluding the Children in Need review

June 2019

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Secretary of State Foreword

Every child deserves the chance to fulfil their potential and achieve the best educational outcomes possible, whatever their background, whatever their path. Yet adversity in childhood diminishes that chance, putting at a disadvantage those who have needed children's social care to provide them with help and protection.

Tireless work by social workers, school staff and others has long been motivated by supporting these children, knowing what it takes to help them succeed. But the Children in Need review is the first time that we have evidenced this. In doing so, the focus and clarity of the review has uncovered how gaps in attainment come about for these children, and in learning from best practice happening already, what we must do to overcome them.

From the day-to-day reality on the frontline, we now know that nationally at least 1.6 million children have needed a social worker at some point, equivalent to 1 in 10 children last year. The large majority are not in care, but facing adversity in families, lacking the safety and stability that most take for granted. The impact on attainment for children who currently need this help and protection is more severe than coming from a low-income background. It should concern all of us that there is such a significant additional impact on educational outcomes, and that these poor outcomes last, even after social work involvement has ended – risking a lifetime toll on employment, health, and social participation. But most of all, it must galvanise us to action, sustaining our Manifesto commitment to deliver the review, by doing more to transform these outcomes.

This will always require services beyond schools to prevent and address why children are in need, promoting safety and stability through social care. Without this, schools too often find themselves with no choice but to try and support as best they can, the vulnerable pupils they see each day – supporting children in ways far beyond their purpose in providing an education. Our social care reforms already underway are about driving up the quality of local authority services, developing a highly capable, skilled workforce, and investing in strengthening families. We still have further to go.

Tackling the drivers of need must be a common endeavour across Government, not an ask of schools. Findings from the review will not fall into this trap, where I am determined that children should get the right help through every agency playing their part, sharing their expertise, and working together. Most commonly, children are affected by the problems their parents experience – domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental ill health – but this also increases children's own vulnerability as they reach adolescence. We therefore need social care, health, police, youth services and more, that are resourced and able to prevent and resolve causes, and support children and families – acting early, together with schools, to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Towards achieving this, the Children in Need review set out to understand what more can make a difference in education. Learning from those with expertise, our evidence through the review leads us to where renewed action by Government should start: promoting visibility and recognition, not only for the purposes of safeguarding but in education; keeping children in school, making sure that this is a protective factor against abuse, neglect and exploitation; raising aspiration to expect more and better for these children, in the belief that they can succeed; and, finally, supporting schools to support children themselves – recognising how far adversity in childhood has lasting consequences for attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.

Undeterred by these barriers, schools that I have visited are doing incredible work to help children succeed against the odds. I have been struck by the dedication of school leaders and staff in making sure that education makes a positive difference to every child's life chances. That commitment is unwavering and ambition for children uncompromised, in spite of the pressures that I recognise schools and social care are facing. The role of schools is in educating children, but I have seen how far they are going above and beyond this, in order that children are attending each day, ready to learn, and able to benefit from the best that our schools can offer.

Our aim is that action following this review – alongside the Government's response to the Timpson Review of School Exclusions – should contribute to cracking some of the systemic challenges to supporting vulnerable children. That means supporting better information sharing, improving partnerships with local authorities, strengthening co-ordination of support, and working with schools to build and share the evidence of what interventions are most effective in improving these children's outcomes.

Whilst the review has reached its conclusion, it has only strengthened my commitment to end the injustice of these children's poor outcomes. Already at the heart of keeping children safe, now when we look to the future of education – and educational disadvantage in particular – these children must be at the forefront of action here too. We all need to work together, as a priority, to make this happen; this is only the start.

Rt Hon. Damian Hinds MP

Secretary of State for Education

1. Introduction

"Everybody needs an education […] I just want to learn" (young person)

Our ambition for Children in Need of help and protection is the same as for any other child: that they should be safe and have the opportunity to succeed. Those who have faced adversity, trauma, or are disabled may face barriers in education, but this cannot be allowed to stop any child from realising their potential.

In support of this, the purpose of the Government's reforms to children's social care has long been to improve safety and stability for all of these children. In recent years, there has also been concerted action to promote the educational outcomes of Looked After Children and care leavers, for whom the state is a corporate parent. Yet there remained a larger group, still needing social care support but at home with their parents, whose educational outcomes had historically lacked the same attention and focus. In building the evidence around this, the Children in Need review has transformed our understanding of these children – for the first time, shining a light on their experiences, the impact this has on educational outcomes, and what makes a difference to improving these.

Our interim findings, published in December 2018, set out what is needed, and a guide for how children can be best supported. Our conclusion now sets out the aims that we, as Government, commit to pursue in support of making this happen, as well as further findings to act on now. Across four areas of action, we will catalyse change in the near term. Whilst bringing the review to an end, this sets the direction for what is only the beginning of what must be continued long-term efforts – together with schools, social care, health, police and more – if we are to make a meaningful difference.

Our evidence has come from seeing what works in some of the places that some children are doing well, compared to others. Whilst we found no single way of achieving this and differences in approaches, nevertheless there were some common features in what worked well. Learning from this, future action aims to bring more children, more local authority social care services, and more schools closer to the best performing and achieve greater consistency – in doing so, closing disadvantage gaps and raising standards for all.

Who are 'Children in Need'?

For the purposes of the review, we have used the broadest statutory definition of Children in Need under the Children Act 1989, encompassing all those children receiving statutory support from local authority social care including those on a Children in Need Plan, on a Child Protection Plan and Looked After Children. Under the Children Act 1989, all disabled children are Children in Need.

Through the review, we have found that amongst practitioners working with children, the term 'Children in Need' is used variously to mean either some or all of these groups. The term is not widely used at all beyond this context, contributing to misunderstanding and lack of recognition. We therefore use the term 'children who need or have needed a social worker'. This covers all groups who, beyond any assessment, are accessing social care support for safeguarding and/or welfare purposes, including disabled children. The data and analysis included in this publication, unless stated otherwise, refers to children who are on a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or Looked After, rather than children who were only referred, or referred and assessed, but deemed not in need of further statutory support. Where in this publication, we refer to children who have 'ever' needed a social worker, this covers all those who have needed a social worker at some point over 6 years between 2012/13 and 2017/18.

Given often similar backgrounds and prior experiences, our findings through the review are relevant to Previously Looked After Children who leave care, including through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders.

What we've done

Through the review, we have:

- developed a new dataset which links the Children in Need Census longitudinally from 2012/13 to 2017/18, matching it to education records, in order to conduct extensive new analysis exploring the association between children's characteristics, social care history and educational outcomes

- delivered a Call for Evidence – with over 600 responses mainly from school leaders, sharing expertise and setting out what is already happening in practice to support children and improve outcomes

- conducted a broad programme of qualitative evidence gathering through: deep dive visits to schools identified as achieving positive attainment and progress for children with a social worker; and workshops with voluntary sector organisations who work directly with children and families

- in structured conversations with practitioners working in education, engaged with headteachers, senior leaders including of multi-academy trusts, governors, teaching and pastoral staff, as well as Virtual School Heads. Across children's social care, education and health, we have engaged with Directors of Children Services, assistant directors, practice leaders, social workers, child and adolescent mental health practitioners, and a range of family support workers

- sought the views of children and young people who have or have had a social worker, by speaking directly to children age 13 -17 and young adults through participation groups in the North West and Care Leaver Groups

- taken account of academic evidence and research, including through a [literature review](literature) conducted by the Early Intervention Foundation, and joint work with the University of Oxford's Rees Centre

- partnered with three what works centres: the Education Endowment Foundation, What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, and the Early Intervention Foundation

Key findings from our data and analysis[1]

- **scale**: at least 1.6 million children have needed a social worker between 2012/13 and 2017/18 – equivalent to 1 in 10 of all children in 2018 having ever needed a social worker, at some point currently or previously over the 6 years

- **becoming Looked After**: almost two-thirds of children who were Looked After in 2017/18 had been on a Child in in Need Plan at some point in the previous 5 years and nearly 40% had been on a Child Protection Plan

- **pupil population**: children who have ever needed a social worker are present in 98% of schools; only 500 schools do not have a single pupil known to have been in need at some point between 2012/13 and 2017/18

- **poor educational outcomes**: children who have needed a social worker do significantly worse than others at all stages of education. Those on a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan are almost as likely to do poorly as Looked After Children. Controlling for a range of other factors such as special educational needs, low income, ethnicity, English as an additional language, past school moves and where a child lives, children who needed a social worker in the year of GCSEs are half as likely to achieve a strong pass in English and Maths than those who were not. Poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends, where children who needed a social worker up to 4 years prior to GCSEs were between 25 to 50% less likely to achieve a strong pass in English and Maths

- **poor lifetime outcomes**: of young people who needed a social worker in the year of GCSEs, after age 18, 6% were in higher education compared to 27% of those not in need; by age 21, half had still not achieved Level 2 qualifications (which include GCSEs), compared to 11% of those not in need

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[1] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

A summary of our conclusions

The review has established that needing help and protection, even briefly, has a profound impact on children's educational outcomes. This disadvantage is additional to other needs, although compounded for many children by also having special educational needs or living in a low-income family.

Given the complexity of overlapping problems faced by these children and their families – sometimes acute, sometimes more chronic – helping them often requires intensive, invested support. We know that every day, dedicated school staff, social workers and others are working nonstop, in difficult circumstances, to keep children safe, happy and accessing the education they deserve. We have seen how doing so can require hard choices of leaders in schools and social care, even with the ambition for children to succeed shared by many – including parents, despite many struggling themselves with domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental ill health or other issues.

The review set out to understand why educational outcomes are poor and what more can be done to improve them. We found both important new areas for action, and evidence that emphasised what we understood already – that even whilst facing challenging circumstances, including pressures on budgets, higher demand for services, and new and emerging risks to children, schools and social care have been dedicated to supporting children and families. The findings from the review do not address every challenge facing schools and social care, nor are our areas for action the sum total of what will improve outcomes. Instead, we have sought to respond to the evidence the review has brought to light, including the particular barriers that children who have needed a social worker face, and what we have seen is working well in practice. This starts with understanding how children's social care and schools make a difference; moving towards breaking the cycle of disadvantage, to help children realise their potential.

Children's social care support

The review has shown how far safety, stability and educational outcomes are linked: the longer a child is in need or the more significant the risk of harm, the greater the impact on education. Pupils who consistently needed a social worker in every year were less likely to achieve the expected standard at Key Stage 2 than those who were in need in only some; the same trend holds at Key Stage 4 in comparing attainment scores.[2] Improving outcomes will therefore always require addressing why children have needed a social worker in the first place – on the frontline, this goes well beyond the role of schools and

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[2] Children in Need: data and analysis: December 2018

will always rely on children's social care to lead work to strengthen families, promote safety and stability, and partner with agencies to safeguard children.

We recognise, however, that the majority of children who are in need of help and protection live in places where children's social care services are less than good – over 50% of areas. [3] That is why we are already undertaking an ambitious programme of reform to improve children's social care. The pillars of this programme – ensuring there are high performing services everywhere; that the social work workforce is highly capable and highly skilled; and that children and families are supported by a national system of excellent and innovative practice – are a foundation for addressing safeguarding risks, promoting children's welfare, and improving their engagement in education. Our findings through the review have reinforced how far social work practice that makes a difference to families and communities is facilitated by strong local authority leadership, greater stability in social workers and placements, and lower caseloads that free up social workers to spend more time with children.

To improve social care, we are identifying and putting support in place for local authorities that are at risk of failing with help from sector-led regional alliances; for those areas that are failing, we are intervening; and for all, we are encouraging our best local authorities to lead the way through the Partners in Practice programme. Since 2017, we have seen the number of local authorities judged inadequate decline by around a quarter.[4] To address varied capability across the social work workforce and improve the support delivered to families, we are delivering new graduate entry programmes to train new social workers, have set up a new regulator, Social Work England, and are rolling out a National Assessment and Accreditation System. Through establishing the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, and new multi-agency arrangements to improve safeguarding, we are building evidence of what makes a difference to children and establishing partnerships for agencies to do this together.

Support in and around schools

It is the role of children's social care to protect children and strengthen families, working with wider services to address the causes of need. It is the role of schools to provide children who have needed a social worker with an excellent education, of the same standard as for all other pupils. For these children, more so than their peers, engaging in education and being in school can also be a protective factor, helping to keep children safe whether they are at risk of harm within or outside the home.

[3] Ofsted: Local Authority and Children's Homes in England Inspections and Outcomes
[4] Ofsted: Local Authority and Children's Homes in England Inspections and Outcomes

The review found that children who have ever needed a social worker, either currently or previously, face barriers to education: through adversity and traumatic experiences; known safeguarding risks; sometimes, a lack of parental advocate. These are some of the children who, as a result of their experiences, are at high risk of mental ill health themselves. There are also barriers shared with other disadvantaged groups but which are particularly acute for these children: a poor home learning environment; social, emotional and behavioural needs; persistent absence. Children may also have additional needs linked to a disability. Whilst social care involvement may be relatively short-term – nearly half of the 1.6 million children were in need in only one year between 2012/13 and 2017/18 – a school's involvement is inevitably longer.

Children who have needed a social worker need the same essentials for a good education as all pupils: good teaching, a broad curriculum, high-quality qualifications and a safe and calm environment for learning. Where additional help is needed it is to support children and overcome the barriers children face so that they can access and benefit equally from all of what schools provide for their pupils. Through the review, we have seen this achieved through whole school approaches that benefit the most vulnerable as much as all pupils, alongside reasonable adjustments and targeted interventions that meet children's needs.

Areas for action

In embarking on the review, we recognised that social care reforms were already underway aimed at improving children's safety and stability, and therefore set out to build evidence where there had been far less Government focus – in education. In concluding the review, we have identified four areas of action which we commit to pursue, starting to address some of the most significant systemic challenges to improving educational outcomes.

Visibility: hidden until now, the review has uncovered the scale of how many children have ever needed a social worker and the lasting consequences for educational outcomes. We will work towards better recognition of this, so that all schools understand the size of their cohort, as well as improving how the information needed to respond effectively is shared between social care and schools.

Keeping children in education: children who have needed a social worker are more likely to be out of school despite known risks, when being in education would keep them safer and able to achieve. Children must be supported, by all agencies, to be in school – be it through reducing persistent absence, avoiding children being out of school where safety is a concern, tackling off-rolling, or giving those at risk of exclusion the best chance to succeed.

Aspiration: given the very difficult circumstances children face, an instinctive and even well-meaning response can be that they are dealing with enough already and so to expect less of them. Yet given how far these circumstances persist, education must be pursued in parallel to safety. Maintaining high aspiration is what children have told us they want, and brings schools and social care together to share expertise and deliver support which focuses on realising potential.

Support in and around school: whilst still developing, we need to share evidence of what works, so that schools can adopt approaches and deliver interventions that are most effective. Given the adversity and traumatic experiences children have faced and their social, emotional and mental health needs, this requires a wider system of specialist support in and around schools.

These areas for action focus on improving educational outcomes once children have come to need help and protection. We will take this action forward alongside continuing to improve children's social care. Yet in order to prevent, address and mitigate the impact of circumstances that warrant children's social care involvement, the review has reinforced the importance of early and concerted action – beyond schools and beyond the Department for Education – to reduce need in the first place. This requires **support for families and communities** where in concluding the review, we have brought together action underway by different departments, in benefiting Children in Need of help and protection. Across Government, we will continue to work together in preventing and tackling problems that are drivers of need and strengthening families, from the early years through to adolescence.

2. Visibility

This means: better recognition of the scale of how many children have ever needed a social worker; national focus in policy and practice; improving the availability of data; and improved information sharing between social care and schools.

The review has uncovered and evidenced the scale of childhood adversity in how many children have needed a social worker: at least 1 in 10 children had, in 2018, needed a social worker at some point currently or previously, which is equivalent to around 3 pupils in every classroom on average.[5] Children who have ever needed a social worker are present in all but 500 schools and, whilst more so in some schools than others, in half of secondaries these children make up between 10 to 20% of pupils.[6] Whilst they may be known to schools for the purposes of safeguarding, these children are not always visible in terms of education and closing the attainment gap. Yet we now know that they suffer significant damage to their educational outcomes, with an increased likelihood of poor attainment even when controlling for a wide range of other factors. Our collective view on educational disadvantage has not, until now, understood the disadvantage associated with being in need of help and protection. Our clear conclusion is that this group has been hidden, and not considered within the policies and practices that could help them to achieve better educational outcomes.

We are therefore starting now what will be a long-term process in raising their visibility, towards better recognition and representation in policy and practice. For children who currently need a social worker, this means ensuring that schools know who they are and can respond to live safeguarding and welfare needs. For the wider group of children who have ever needed a social worker, this means ensuring that across Government departments and frontline agencies, we understand and can respond to the educational disadvantage they face. Whilst visibility, in and of itself, is not enough to change individual children's circumstances, the focus it brings is key to unlocking action at a national scale.

National focus

Prominence in national education data is an important part of raising visibility. So too is making clear at every opportunity that children who have needed a social worker should be represented in relevant policy-making across Government. The relationship between being in need and educational outcomes is evidenced in our new data, showing that children who have ever needed a social worker are 25% to 50% less likely to achieve a

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[5] [Children in Need: data and analysis: December 2018](#)

[6] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

strong pass at GCSE in English and Maths even 4 years after social worker involvement has ended. This confirms that a national focus should include children who have previously, as well as currently, needed a social worker.[7]

New data and analysis has played a powerful role in making these children visible – including a national first in being able to track over time their experiences, interactions with services, and outcomes. That is why we will regularly update our new longitudinal dataset so that in future we always have a strong and developing understanding. Where currently the absence of this group demonstrates their invisibility, we will look to include new breakdowns covering these children in relevant national schools statistics and consider how best schools can understand this scale within their pupil population. This is not the end point – it is a signal of our priority and commitment to embedding better awareness and understanding at a national level.

There is no quick fix to this, which is why we are making a long-term commitment to raise the visibility of this group nationally. This work has already begun. Its significance is reflected in Ofsted's decision to reference this group as disadvantaged for the first time in its new schools inspection handbook.[8] Starting with the reasons for being referred to social care, children must be recognised in the policy that affects them: domestic abuse and mental health are the two most prevalent factors identified by social workers, which is why we have made sure they have been recognised and considered in the Government consultation response [Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse](#) and in implementing the [Transforming children and young people's mental health provision green paper](#).[9]

Information sharing

Effective support depends on having a picture of a child's circumstances, which necessitates information sharing across agencies. Through the review, we have seen that, in order to determine the right response, schools need an individual-level understanding of the circumstances facing pupils currently with a social worker – given the live safeguarding risks and the immediate day-to-day impact on their attendance, behaviour, and readiness to learn.

"The pastoral teacher and the form tutor should know" (young person)

Through the review, we have found that schools generally know which children currently have a social worker given their involvement in safeguarding. However, the systems for

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[7] [Children in Need: data and analysis: December 2018](#)

[8] Ofsted: [education inspection framework](#) and [school handbook](#) (applies from September 2019)

[9] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

sharing information are not wholly reliable for every child and there is no consistency in how and what information is held. It often depends on local partnership arrangements, and is influenced variously by agencies' confidence or concerns around seeking consent or jeopardising privacy. In these circumstances, finding out vital information is sometimes a significant burden; through the review, we saw school staff expending significant efforts in trying. A fundamental conclusion of the review, reinforcing existing guidance, is that local authorities should share the fact of a child currently having a social worker, and schools should hold and use this information so that they can take the right decisions that are in the best interests of children's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. There are clear powers to do so, under existing duties on both agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Government's expectation is that this should be considered as a matter of routine. Building on recent work to promote information sharing, including through a new safeguarding processing condition for special category data in the Data Protection Act 2018, we will seek further opportunities to communicate this expectation including in future revisions of the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children.

In promoting both safety and stability for children, already, information should be shared both ways between social care and schools – particularly where this could be affected by changes in education. For Looked After Children, schools should already notify the Virtual School Head of decisions to exclude. But there is little currently that ensures social workers will know about and therefore be able to take account of such decisions in managing risk for those on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. Taking forward a recommendation from the Timpson Review of School Exclusions, we will look to ensure that, for children who have been identified as at risk, their social worker is notified when they are excluded or moved out of school for any other reason. Implementing this in the right way is critical, given it needs to be clear, quick and efficient. We will work with schools and local authorities to consider the implications and clarify how this sits alongside existing duties, to make sure this works in practice.

> **St Mary's College, Hull**
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> St Mary's College Hull places great importance on having respect for children and families, valuing difference, whilst expecting respect for the school community in return. This starts with a carefully planned transition programme for vulnerable pupils from primary to secondary and well-established information sharing protocols within the school and with local authority social care. This ensures that children who have a social worker are identified quickly and that their education and safeguarding needs are understood by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Management records allow teachers to seek more detail when needed. As part of the transition, St Mary's College also makes home visits. By establishing early contact, the school is able to build trust with the family, understand what children care about, how they learn, and how to mitigate difficulties that keep children out of school. St Mary's College uses this understanding to offer support where barriers hinder academic progress, such as allowing children to do extra study at school rather than at home, supporting progress against ambitious targets.

Raising visibility is key to improving outcomes. It matters because without recognition and understanding, schools cannot design the right approaches, support or partnerships to overcome the barriers children face. However, we must do this carefully, acknowledging potential unintended consequences if we go too far, too quickly. Without a consistent understanding within schools of who these children are, we do not believe that creating formal accountability measures would be right or effective. Information sharing is vital, and there are methods, particularly through maximising the use of technology, to record and communicate information efficiently. However, we need to guard against an excessive focus on data and monitoring, which is not our aim and risks detracting from more meaningful direct support. Taking this into account, this stage of the review represents a starting point for meaningfully and effectively raising awareness of this disadvantaged group.

3. Keeping children in education

This means: recognising increased risks when children are missing education; tackling persistent absence; improving in-year admissions; avoiding children being out of school where safety is a concern; and action around exclusions, off-rolling and alternative provision.

For the majority of children who have needed a social worker, this is due to known safeguarding risks at home or in the community: half are in need due to abuse and neglect, a further quarter due to family dysfunction or stress.[10] Keeping children in education relies on local authorities, schools, health, police and others working together.

"Sometimes, I sit at home and think 'I wish I were in school now" (young person)

Education is a protective factor – at its best, it offers a safe space to access support, ensures oversight and support from professionals, and helps children discover their talents, develop resilience, and realise their potential. Where children are not in school – or if school ceases to be the safe place it should be – they miss both the protections and opportunities it can provide, whilst becoming more vulnerable to harm. The cost of missing education, particularly for children where there are safeguarding concerns, is therefore simply too high.

Despite this, data and analysis through the review has shown that children who have needed a social worker have particularly unstable experiences of education. We heard through the review that this is often due to complex and constraining family circumstances, as well decisions taken by social care – particularly around placements for Looked After Children – and in some schools, for example to exclude or in directing children off-site. Combined with data from the Timpson Review of School Exclusions, we now know that: children who need a social worker are nearly twice as likely to join a school at an unusual time of year, around 3 times more likely to be persistently absent and between 2 to 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded, which can result in lack of stability in educational placements as children move to new schools. [11] [12]

Absence

Regular attendance is crucial for improving outcomes. It is well-established that pupils with higher overall absence tend to do less well in their GCSEs and those with poor school attendance are more likely not to be in education, employment or training post-16. Equally, preventing absence from school among vulnerable pupils is crucial, because

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[10] Children in Need: data and analysis: March 2018

[11] Children in Need: data and analysis: March 2018

[12] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

what school provides acts as protection – both where the home is not a safe place, and away from the threat of gangs, crime or exploitation. We have seen this reinforced in recent serious case reviews where children have been involved in serious violence as victims and perpetrators. In 2017/18, a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker, currently or previously, were persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.[13] This group were 1.5 times more likely to have had an authorised absence, and almost 3 times as likely to have an unauthorised absence.[14]

It is imperative we learn from best practice and tackle persistent absence to keep children safely in education. We will commission new research to understand what is most effective at improving persistent absence in practice, covering children who need a social worker amongst other vulnerable groups. Already through the review, we have seen the relevance of strengths-based, whole family approaches in children's social care. Whilst having a primary purpose in keeping families together, in doing so, the models of practice being rolled out through the 'Strengthening Families, Protecting Children' programme have shown some impact in reducing absence for children currently supported by social care.

Moving between and out of school

Children who have needed a social worker move schools more than other children.[15] This may often be around family circumstances far beyond a school's control, such as when families fleeing domestic abuse forces children to leave. We heard during the review, as well as in responses to the Domestic Abuse consultation, that this can lead to missing education where there are delays in securing a school place in-year. We will act on our commitment to take forward changes to the School Admissions Code and improve the clarity, timeliness and transparency of the in-year admissions process to ensure all vulnerable children can access a school place as quickly as possible. We will also strengthen and improve the Fair Access Protocols, and ensure these can be used to admit children who currently need a social worker and specifically children in refuges.

As well as children moving between schools, the Timpson Review of School Exclusions reported concerns about off-rolling and a lack of safeguards which, at its worst, can see vulnerable children leave education altogether and exposed to potential safeguarding risks. Where children already face safeguarding risks at home, we should not expect that the home is a suitable setting for their education. We are consulting on proposals for mandatory registration by local authorities of children who are not registered at specified

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[13] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[14] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[15] Children in Need: data and analysis: March 2018

types of school.[16] But already, through recent guidance, we have made clear that where parents are not meeting their responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education, local authorities are justified to take action – either through existing safeguarding powers if this places the child at risk, or through school attendance measures. This guidance changes the previously commonly understood position, clarifying that a local authority has sufficient justification in taking action where parents do not engage.

Exclusions and alternative provision

The de Ferrers Academy

The de Ferrers Academy provides a safe and supportive environment for students who are struggling to engage in the classroom, not only within their own school, but contributing to an inclusion partnership across local schools. Across a population of more than 2,200 pupils, trained pastoral staff provide support on a one-to-one basis, to ensure that every child continues to learn. On-site alternative provision can be accessed short or long-term, where teaching is closely linked to the main school's curriculum. Specialist support helps children to build the resilience they need to return to the classroom, but a pass is provided, should they need to leave a lesson or spend more time with the Support and Guidance team. The school's electronic reporting system automatically raises concerns or patterns in relation to absence, which is reported to the Designated Safeguard Lead. Over time, the Academy Safeguarding Team has built strong working relationships with children's social care, meaning they know which issues are historic and ongoing, those likely to be raised over the school holiday, and what assessments should take place. This helps to address issues at the earliest possible stage, keeping children safe and participating in education.

In schools we visited through the review, we saw that all pupils benefit from school being a safe and calm learning environment – but that this can particularly support children who have needed a social worker. Where children may lack consistency, clear boundaries and a place free from harm in their home lives, schools can offer much-needed stability and security. Experiences at home can affect children's behaviour, cognition, and communication, leaving them at greater likelihood of exclusion and in need of support to enable them to remain in mainstream wherever possible. Pupils who have ever needed a social worker between 2012/13 and 2017/18 were on average 2 to 4 times more likely to be excluded than their peers.[17] This means that all of our recent commitments made in response to the Timpson Review of School Exclusions are vital to this group: from supporting headteachers to maintain safe and orderly environments; to supporting schools and their partners to put in place effective early interventions including rewriting

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[16] Department for Education 'Children not in school: proposed legislation', April 2019
[17] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

guidance to provide consistency and clarity on good practice; to consulting this autumn on making schools accountable for the outcomes of excluded children.

Where children are excluded for a fixed period, the implications of missing education for a short period in the initial days before a new place is arranged, or in some cases repeated short periods, can be significant. We have already committed to consult on reducing the limit on the total number of days a pupil can be excluded for a fixed period in one year, and whether to strengthen the requirement to arrange alternative provision during fixed-period exclusions. As part of this consultation, we will ask the question of whether additional safeguards are needed for children who currently need a social worker, to prevent missing education increasing a risk of harm.

Alternative provision (AP) must provide a high quality education that meets the needs of pupils who spend time there and prepares them for the next stage of their lives – whether that is education, employment or training. In the autumn, we will set out plans to go further to improve outcomes for children in AP, including how we will support providers to attract and develop high-quality staff through a new AP workforce programme; and how we will help commissioners and providers to identify and recognise good practice.

Analysis through the review shows that children who have ever needed a social worker make up 50% of the pupil population in more than 80% of all state funded alternative provision settings; those currently in need being over 10 times more likely to attend these educational settings than all other pupils.[18] [19] Taking forward reforms to improve the outcomes of all children in alternative provision will therefore contribute to improving outcomes for children who have needed a social worker. We want these settings to be recognised as centres of excellence in supporting vulnerable children, and this will require expertise to recognise and respond to the needs of children who have experienced abuse, neglect and constraining family circumstances. The next phase of our AP workforce programme is to gather evidence on the priority issues facing the workforce. This will include evidence on whether more is needed to ensure the AP workforce has the specialist expertise around adversity and trauma it needs to support vulnerable children, so that any gaps can be addressed.

All of this marks significant progress: strengthening our expectation that all children who have needed a social worker must be in suitable education, and supporting schools and social care to work together to keep children in school. We will reflect the risks associated with these children missing education in statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education. No child should be missing education, least of all those who stand to benefit most.

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[18]Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[19] Children in Need: data and analysis: March 2018

4. Aspiration

> This means: high expectations for children to achieve, pursuing safety in parallel but not as a precursor; aspirational leadership; partnerships with aspiration as a shared goal; key roles that bring schools and social care together.

Against a backdrop of significant adversity, children who have needed a social worker can and do achieve in education. Of children who have ever needed a social worker between 2012/13 and 2016/17, almost a fifth achieved Attainment 8 scores higher than the average for children who never needed a social worker.[20] Education Endowment Foundation analysis concludes that most young people have high aspiration for themselves, which has been emphasised through the review by children who expressed their desire to do well in school and to succeed in employment and in life – not wanting to be defined by their family circumstances or need for social care support.[21]

> "Some people might be judged for their past" (young person)

In visiting places where children who have needed a social worker do well, we have consistently seen high aspiration from both schools leaders and Directors of Children's Services as a shared long-term goal. School staff and social workers alike have told us how their work is motivated by a strong belief that all children should have the opportunity to succeed. Aspiration is not a policy, but the way in which we collectively prioritise children's success in education, alongside addressing risks to their safety. During the review we have been mindful that, in revealing the scale of educational disadvantage faced by these children, it is not our intention to lower expectations for what they can achieve. In speaking to children, what they wanted was for adults to be sensitive to their situations, but also ambitious for their futures. It is not always an easy balance to achieve.

Our data has reinforced that difficult family circumstances – far beyond the role of schools to address – persist for long periods of time, often years, and some may never resolve fully. Of those on a Child Protection Plan at some point in 2017/18, looking back to 2012/13, more than 10% had spent a total number of days equivalent to 2 years or more in need.[22] The complexity of families' problems and backgrounds can move the focus away from children's strengths and potential, towards short-term needs and risk management. That is why, as set out in our interim findings, planning by social workers should take into account children's long-term outcomes, with a good Child in Need or Child Protection Plan including educational outcomes as a measure of progress.

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[20] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

[21] The Education Endowment Foundation

[22] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019 This will include some children subject to child protection plans in 2017/18 which began prior to 2017/18.

Even if done with the best of intentions when children are facing adversity, lowering academic expectations because children are dealing with enough already can put their lifetime outcomes at risk. Education, therefore, cannot be put on hold until children's family circumstances are resolved – safety and stability for these children must be pursued by all agencies alongside a strong aspiration for educational achievement and lifetime outcomes. Currently, of those who needed a social worker in the year of GCSEs, it remains that by age 21, half of young people had still not achieved Level 2 qualifications (which include GCSEs), compared to 11% of those not in need.[23]

Leadership and partnerships

Aspiration is what brings schools and social care together, driving good practice and strategic decisions. Whilst the day-to-day activity of schools and social care will necessarily differ, through the review we saw how a shared goal around high aspiration helps to foster strong partnerships across agencies. For these children, Directors of Children's Services are necessarily at the heart of this, with responsibilities across both education and social care. We will value, promote, and incentivise leadership that establishes a culture of high aspiration, and decision-making that balances high support with high standards for disadvantaged children. Our Partners in Practice programme demonstrates how well this can work in areas of high performing local authorities; our improvement and intervention programmes are tackling those local authorities at risk of failing, with the aim of bringing them closer to the standard of the best.

Northampton Academy

At Northampton Academy, leaders ensure that there is a clear and positive message that all children can achieve. They have high expectations for attainment and behaviour, supported by a large pastoral team. To support children in their aspiration, the school invites guests who were educated in the local area, universities and local industry to speak to pupils about what they can achieve and opportunities for their futures. Every pupil is given a leadership role – from anti-bullying to environment ambassadors. Within a sanction-based behaviour policy, the school makes sure that children feel listened to, in order to build their emotional capital. Northampton Academy ensures that there is consistency for children and their parents or carers, by having a learning manager throughout their time in school who knows the children well and has access to information about their circumstances and needs. The school sees itself as having an important role in working alongside children's social care, including to challenge and hold others to account where children are not receiving wider support necessary to meet their needs.

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[23] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

We have already committed, in the context of exclusions, to deliver a practice programme that embeds effective partnership working between local authorities, schools and alternative provision to support vulnerable children. In schools, we will build on existing work to examine how we can best support school leaders to boost aspiration, for example as part of a forthcoming review of Headteacher Standards. In local authorities we will learn from the early adopters of the new multi-agency arrangements; the work of our Partners in Practice where they focus on promoting educational outcomes; and through taking forward an aspiring leaders programme for Directors of Children's Services to embed strong leadership across social care, focussing on developing collaborative approaches across agencies. We also recognise the role we can play nationally in convening local authorities, schools and other partners to share good practice and learn from what is already working on the ground for these children.

Roles between schools and social care

Through the review, we have seen the dedication of practitioners across schools and social care in advocating for this group – influencing school and social care leaders, and ensuring support comes together in a co-ordinated way. Where the right people have been in the right roles, we have seen how progress can be made. An increased focus on the educational outcomes of children who have needed a social worker will therefore necessitate long-term consideration about the capacity and expertise to do this, across schools and social care.

Virtual School Heads already play a key role in raising aspiration and promoting the educational achievement of Looked After Children and since 2018, previously Looked After Children. The best Virtual School Heads bridge the gap by convening schools and social care, offering support and constructive challenge to both. For Looked After Children, the role provides advocacy for individual children in admissions, exclusions and the development of Personal Education Plans; this is different for previously Looked After Children, where the role focusses on supporting understanding and awareness of the cohort. In doing so, Virtual School Heads ensure there is always a focus on education as the path to successful adult lives. The Right Balance for Families' Children's Social Care Innovation Programme project is already testing an adapted version of this role for a broader group of children who need a social worker.

"It is important to find someone who understands you" (young person)

Through the review, we have seen and heard that the strategic position of the Virtual School Head, and their strong advocacy ability, might provide opportunities to raise visibility and understanding of the educational needs of children who have needed a social worker across both schools and social care. Clearly, though, given the size of this group, extending the Virtual School Head model would require adapting how the role operates – at a strategic level for the whole cohort, rather than involvement for individual

children. We will learn from innovation already underway and explore whether there is a case for creating the capacity that would be needed to do this at scale.

Through our Opportunity Area local authorities, and through the What Works Centre for Children Social Care, trials are underway across the country testing the effectiveness of models which embed social workers in the school environment. These aim to both improve outcomes for children and families, and strengthen local joint working. We will learn from and consider how to build on the evidence from these trials.

5. Support in and around schools

This means: developing and sharing evidence of what works; recognising and responding to social, emotional and mental health needs; establishing specialist support in and around schools to facilitate and coordinate effective interventions.

The schools system already aims to ensure that no child is left behind. However, where children have lived through adversity or traumatic experiences, this creates lasting barriers to education which make it difficult for them to achieve good outcomes, and can limit the support they receive elsewhere from parents, carers or wider networks. Children's social care must play a vital role in strengthening families and promoting engagement in education. In overcoming how barriers manifest in school, the review found that where children are succeeding against the odds, this was achieved through whole school approaches, which establish how everyone will work together. We saw that these approaches support the most vulnerable just as effectively as all pupils, together with additional academic and pastoral support targeted to meet individual needs.

Yet we also heard from school staff who were clear that support was needed for children, but found themselves struggling to know what interventions would deliver better outcomes or to access specialist help needed to overcome the barriers children face. Our Early Intervention Foundation literature review also concluded that there is a lack of evidence into what works to address these barriers, and recommended further research be undertaken.

What works

We must support schools and social care in having the right tools to make a difference to educational outcomes. That is why, in conjunction with the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, we have started to build the evidence – re-analysing the Education Endowment Foundation's trials to look at the impact for children who have needed a social worker, and then publish findings on the effectiveness of interventions for these children. Together with both the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care and the EEF, we will look to continue building the evidence; as this develops, we will monitor the availability of evidence-based services to ensure schools can access the most promising interventions. In children's social care, there are promising signs from strengths-based, whole-family models supported by multi-disciplinary teams – including those we are rolling out as part of the £84 million Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. Where the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care is building evidence of effective social care interventions, this will include evaluating the impact on children's educational outcomes.

The pupil premium provides schools with extra funding to plan and deliver support designed to improve the educational outcomes of their disadvantaged pupils. All Looked After Children are eligible for the pupil premium plus; the majority of those currently on

Child in Need and Child Protection Plans attract the pupil premium.[24] Of pupils in 2017/18 who had ever needed a social worker, around two thirds had also claimed free school meals in the last 6 years.[25] This funding can be used as schools judge best for disadvantaged pupils as a whole, across staff development, whole school approaches, and specific interventions. We are working closely with the EEF to support schools in making best use of this funding, and to clarify how pupil premium can be spent in order to achieve the greatest impact. While pupil premium is allocated based on the numbers of eligible pupils on roll in each school, the funding is not directly attached to the pupils who attract it. Children who have needed a social worker are educationally disadvantaged, experiencing poor outcomes. The freedom school leaders enjoy over the grant's use mean they can use pupil premium to meet the needs of all children who have needed a social worker, and should consider this group in scope of pupil premium strategies.

Recognising and responding to children's needs

To have needed support from children's social care, many children will have lived through traumatic experiences such as abuse and neglect and grown up in complex family circumstances – with lasting consequences for their education. Analysis through the review has reinforced what schools have long known about a high prevalence of social, emotional and mental health needs, the primary type of SEN for those currently in need.

Through our Call for Evidence, and in schools and local authorities we visited, we have seen the difference whole school approaches are making in helping school staff recognise and respond to children's needs. Whilst schools might adopt any number of approaches, what matters is that they encourage consistency across a school, balancing high support and high standards, fostering joined-up working and helping embed a shared ethos amongst school staff and pupils. We saw that working in this way benefits all children, not just those that have needed a social worker.

Many of the approaches shared with us through the review seek to account for how adversity and traumatic experiences can affect child and adolescent development and cognition, as well as emotional and behavioural regulation. We have seen different ways of doing this, reinforced by differences in opinion about how these approaches should be framed. But what we have seen in common is that effective approaches equip staff to respond with respectful, sensitive communication, and to act in maintaining safe, clear boundaries. Equally, these approaches are based on professionals building positive,

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[24] Children in Need: data and analysis: March 2018
[25] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

trusting relationships with children, building on their existing strengths and having high expectations for attainment so children can reach their potential.

We have seen a number of projects already underway focussed specifically on building the evidence around trauma-informed practice – across local authorities, education, police, health, and more. Yet we have also seen other models achieve the same aims, so whilst wanting to learn from this emerging evidence, it is not yet conclusive.

Recognising how many children in alternative provision have needed a social worker, we believe that the right place to start is to consider whether more is needed to ensure the AP workforce has the specialist expertise around adversity and trauma that it needs, if it is to support vulnerable children, and so that any gaps can be addressed. In parallel, we will identify and bring together best practice on recognising and responding to the impacts of childhood adversity, including on mental health. We will ensure through our review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) core content and the implementation of a new core content framework, that all ITT courses equip teachers to identify and respond appropriately to children with mental health needs and know how to work alongside colleagues to ensure those children get the right support.

> *"I know when you get upset and stuff I don't think it's a reason to be naughty or swearing and stuff like that. I think it's a reason to just step outside."* (young person)

Already, we are taking significant steps to ensure all teachers are equipped with the skills to manage and support pupils with challenging behaviour – school staff have told us how children's experiences and backgrounds can affect their behaviour and communication. The early career framework underpins an entitlement for a new fully funded programme of training for early career teachers including training on how to manage behaviour. Going further, planned work on revising behaviour guidance, led by Tom Bennett, will be informed by a full consultation with a range of expertise, including around childhood adversity and disadvantage. We are committed that our findings from the Children in Need review should also inform the implementation of behaviour support networks, where £10 million funding will support schools to share good practice, in order to develop effective behaviour management and whole-school cultures.

For all children, additional activities such as sport, creativity, performing, volunteering and membership, and work-related experiences help to develop the skills and behaviours they need to succeed at school and in life. These activities may be of particular benefit for disadvantaged children, including those who have needed a social worker, whose experiences might not otherwise help them develop these skills and behaviours. An advisory group, chaired by Ian Bauckham CBE, will make recommendations in the autumn 2019 on how schools, colleges and other education settings can best be supported to provide these opportunities for children and young people through personal development and character education.

Co-ordinating support in school

Through the review, we have seen that effective pastoral support that helps children access learning often relies on skilled teams, who bring expertise in addressing social, emotional and mental health needs, as well as the capacity to build relationships, provide interventions, and manage support effectively. This often requires developing strong partnerships with other agencies who can offer expertise and support in school, in addition to what is provided by schools. Our findings are based on what we have seen some schools achieving within current frameworks and funding, but we recognise that school leaders are making difficult decisions regarding staffing and resources when they consider how to deliver support.

Of pupils in 2017/18 who had ever needed a social worker, over a third also received SEN support or had an Education Health and Care Plan – meaning effective support for those with SEN and disabilities necessarily benefits these children.[26] All state funded nurseries and schools must have a SENCO who should be on the leadership team to ensure the school is identifying and providing high quality support, that teachers have the skills they need to do so, and to advocate on children's behalf within the school and other agencies. We are investing over £30 million to train more new educational psychologists to help schools access the right specialists, alongside reviewing the learning standards that SENCOs are required to achieve, recognising the complexity of these children's needs.

Children with a social worker are also more vulnerable than other pupils to mental health problems. In 2018, nearly 40% of children who were Looked After continuously for at least 12 months had emotional and behavioural health scores which were a cause for concern.[27] Across Government, we are investing in specialist mental health provision, including specific support linked to groups of schools and colleges – such as training for senior mental health leads and new mental health support teams, which we will be starting to roll out during the next academic year. Training for the mental health support teams has already started for 25 trailblazer areas, which will be fully up and running at the start of 2020. We will test what works in practice, ensuring teams work collaboratively, providing both specific support for pupils with mild to moderate mental health needs, and helping manage referrals to specialist services for children with more complex needs. We will be clear that training for new senior mental health leads should include understanding the impact of adversity and trauma – providing a source of knowledge in schools, as part of a whole school approach to mental health.

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[26] Children in Need: data and analysis: December 2018
[27] Statistics: looked-after children - GOV.UK

> *"It's just about understanding really […] say if someone does something, it's about understanding why."* (young person)

Whilst this provides support that will benefit children who have needed a social worker, there remains a need for this support to come together in a coherent, coordinated way – recognising the additional needs of these children and reflecting the scale of need across schools.

In schools we visited, we saw how this was achieved by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, as a senior leader with responsibility for managing safeguarding in school, and therefore best placed to know who children are and to join up across academic, pastoral support and the wider involvement of children's social care. Much like the Designated Teacher role for Looked After Children (often taken on by the same member of school staff), we saw Designated Safeguarding Leads playing a vital role in promoting educational outcomes, improving visibility of children, and working in support of other school staff to help them find effective ways of engaging and teaching these children. In doing so, it was clear that this expertise, co-ordination and delineation of responsibility helped make supporting these children easier, but that working in this way held implications for workload.

Reflecting this, we will look to understand the capacity needed to strengthen the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, consulting on this as part of changes to statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education. We recognise that schools are facing pressures, and any changes to the role will not be fully effective without the right support to deliver this. In addition, the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care is launching a project which looks at providing additional support to Designated Safeguarding Leads through monthly supervision from an experienced social worker. The aim is to learn how to support schools in making referrals so families are provided with more effective help.

Cliff Park Ormiston Academy

Cliff Park Ormiston Academy believes every child can learn, no matter the starting point. In building a community where children can succeed, this starts with a focus on wellbeing. Reflecting on the context of the school, leaders have invested in safeguarding management, with a team of Designated Safeguarding Leads joining their safeguarding responsibilities with other key roles, and increasing the capacity within school to understand children's needs. A senior safeguarding manager oversees work with children's social care for individual children, and advises on the school's response to mental health, SEN and use of pupil premium for this group. Children benefit from having a key adult they can trust, where the safeguarding team and school community leads work together to provide consistent support throughout secondary school. Together with strong professional curiosity, these relationships allow children to open up about their mental health. Where stress and anxiety resulting from circumstances in and out of school affects children's ability to learn, school staff can make reasonable adjustments to help children build resilience and stay in school.

6. Supporting families and communities

This means: preventing and tackling parental problems that are drivers of need; strengthening families; support in the early years; and support for adolescents particularly mental health as well as preventing and tackling drivers of need in communities.

Effective, early support for families to prevent need from enduring or escalating will always be in the best interests of children and is why it matters to have good children's social care services everywhere. Our analysis shows how far there is significant opportunity to make progress in addressing children's needs early – even once children are involved with social care: almost two-thirds of children who were Looked After Children in 2017/18 had spent some time on a Child in Need Plan in the previous 5 years, and over a third had spent some time on a Child Protection Plan.[28] Equally, 10% children who were in need in 2017/18 had spent a total number of days equivalent to 4 years or more in need since 2012/13.[29] Consistency of long-term support is valuable for those in care and who are disabled. But otherwise, where children remain in need without the causes being addressed, they face both continued exposure to harm and the prolonged effect of these circumstances on their education.

Support for families

Of the at least 1.6 million children who have ever needed a social worker at some point between 2012/13 and 2017/18, around 10% were Looked After at some point – but the vast majority remain with their families.[30] The most prevalent factors identified were domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance misuse, with assessment data showing 62% of children needing a social worker experienced one or more of these.[31] As parental problems, these often co-occur, caught up with poverty and deprivation – where data available for school-age pupils shows those needing a social worker are more likely to live in income-deprived families.[32] Children's social care need the knowledge and skills to understand the impact of these parental factors, and support parents to access necessary help.

New analysis suggests that rates of adult mental ill health and alcohol misuse in the general population are strongly correlated with rates of Looked After Children, whilst rates of drug misuse and children living in low-income families are moderately

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[28] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[29] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[30] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[31] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019
[32] Children in Need: data and analysis: March 2018

correlated.[33] We have long intuited that the needs of adults and children may be interrelated; this analysis starts to explain how far this could affect variation in levels of need between local authorities.

> *"At school you're thinking about where can I go after school because I don't want to go home. I don't want to go home because he's going to have a go at me or I don't want to be at home because I don't want to be around him. It does play on your mind."* (young person)

The review has reinforced how problems facing families can affect children's education in a wide range of ways, from parental engagement, to attendance, readiness to learn, and concentration. Our evidence therefore demonstrates why it is so important that support for children takes a whole family approach, which has long underpinned the early help provided through the Troubled Families programme. But right across Government, we are committed to addressing the most significant parental problems causing children to need social workers. This includes: the landmark draft Domestic Abuse Bill, published in January 2019, which will play an important part in strengthening support and protection available to those affected by domestic abuse; the 2019 NHS Long Term Plan which commits to expanding access and improving timeliness of adult mental health services for those most in need; and the 2017 Drug Strategy which recognises the importance of supporting vulnerable families and appoints a Drug Recovery Champion to ensure best treatment for those recovering from drug misuse. The Reducing Parental Conflict programme is working with councils across England to help them integrate services which address parental conflict into local provision for families. We are providing £8 million funding for services specifically to support children affected by domestic abuse, alongside £6 million for those with alcohol dependent parents.

We know that supporting families to make meaningful change, in light of the problems they face, can be extremely challenging. This work is incredibly skilled, and the review heard how important relationship-based approaches from social workers and specialist services are in helping parents trust practitioners and in beginning to address these difficulties.

Support in the early years

Of children who have ever needed a social worker between 2012/13 and 2016/17 (in our preliminary analysis), 50% were able to achieve a good level of development in the early years, compared to 72% of children who never needed a social worker.[34] This shows that, from the very beginning of their education, children who have needed a social

[33] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

[34] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

worker have worse outcomes than children who have not. The evidence is clear that the early years are critical for brain development, with a profound impact on children's cognitive, social and emotional development, which affects them into later life. If we are to close the attainment gap that persists throughout school, we must start early.

To support children from this age, the Government will spend around £3.5 billion on early education entitlements this year alone, more than any previous Government. We are developing more high quality nursery provision for disadvantaged children by investing in training and professional development for early years staff in disadvantaged areas, alongside a range of measures to ensure that local areas can put the right support in place for children with disabilities and their families. Early intervention in the first part of a child's life should include early identification and support for social, emotional, behavioural and mental health issues. This is about making sure that children with complex issues, and their family, have the right support, whether that be from a health visitor, a key worker, a GP or a mental health specialist.

However, we know that early childhood education and care cannot provide all that children need to develop well: a child's home learning environment is one of the biggest factors in determining children's development. Where parents themselves are experiencing problems or if the starting point is a home environment that is chaotic or unsafe, the support needed to promote home learning or for parents to support their child's development may be very significant. This is also important for disabled children, who may develop at different rates to their peers or who may need additional specialist support with their development.

We have set a clear ambition to improve children's early language development, and our early years social mobility programme is backed by £100 million of funding. This includes training and tools for health visitors and early years professionals, and a £10 million investment in programmes to build the evidence base on the home learning environment and improve the confidence, knowledge and ability of the workforce to support children with SEN.

Supporting the development of children and young people's speech, language and communication skills is also a priority in each of our Opportunity Areas. These 12 areas, in some of the most deprived parts of England, are receiving a total of £72 million to boost children's educational attainment and life chances, and the programme includes a significant focus on speech, language, and communication, both in the early years and through the school years, to boost educational attainment. Further, we are launching a campaign later this year, which will encourage parents to chat, play and read more with their children. Social workers will have the opportunity to reach out to children in the greatest need and support families to engage with this initiative.

Support for children and young people's mental health

> *"Sometimes the school might have a counsellor and tell them about their past […] when it's one that comes to school and doesn't know anything about you, it might be easier to open up"* (young person)

Mental health problems often develop early and, between the ages of 5 to 15, 1 in every 9 children has a mental disorder.[35] Assessment data shows at least 12% of children had their mental health recorded as a factor by children's social care, and for Looked After Children, almost half meet the criteria for a psychiatric disorder compared to 10% children who are not Looked After. [36] [37] To benefit these children, we will work with Social Work England to reflect mental ill health in the new professional standards for social workers. This will mean that all social workers in England will have to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skill to identify the impact of mental ill health, and that social work education providers will have to ensure this is covered in training.

Prompt access to appropriate support is critical to preventing and meeting mental health needs. For Looked After Children, we are ensuring children are assessed at the right time and have awarded over £1 million to pilot high quality mental health assessments, with a focus on establishing individual needs as children enter care. Learning from the pilots will inform our understanding of what changes are needed to the assessment system for Looked After Children when they first enter care.

More widely, funding for children and young people's mental health services will grow faster than both overall NHS funding and total mental health spending. This means that children and young people's mental health services will for the first time have grown as a proportion of all mental health services. Over the next five years, the NHS will continue to invest in expanding access to community-based mental health services. By 2023 at least an additional 345,000 children and young people aged 0 to 25 will be able to access support via NHS funded mental health services and school or college-based Mental Health Support Teams. Over the coming decade the goal is that 100% of children and young people who need specialist care can access it.

This includes developing new services for children who have complex needs that are not currently being met, including a number of children who have been subject to sexual assault but who are not reaching the attention of Sexual Assault Referral Services. For

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[35] Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017 [PAS] - NHS Digital

[36] Children in Need: data and analysis: June 2019

[37] What works in preventing and treating poor mental health in looked after children. London: NSPCC Luke, N., Sinclair, I., Woolgar, M., & Sebba, J. (2014).

6,000 highly vulnerable children with complex trauma, this will provide consultation, advice, assessment, treatment and transition into integrated services.

Support for adolescents

As children get older, we know that risks come not only from within their families, but can relate to young people themselves and the communities in which they live. Data through the review shows, for example, that parental mental health as a factor in why children need a social worker decreases over childhood, whilst child mental health increases from the least to the most common factor by age 17.

Risks in the wider community include child criminal and sexual exploitation, gang involvement, county lines, and trafficking, as well as serious violence, and peer-on-peer abuse, and can take place in both physical and online spaces. These risks often co-occur and can be further exacerbated by a child's own vulnerabilities, for example if they have a learning disability, or where they have already experienced adversity earlier in childhood.

Through the review, we heard how family-oriented support, predominantly used to address parental problems, is not always able to effectively address these problems. Of the recent increase in numbers of Looked After Children, the largest rise of 20% has been for the age group 16 and over, followed by 18% for those aged 10 to 15 years.[38] We have heard how, in addition to putting young people at risk of harm, these risks also increase and entrench barriers to education.

There is a need for a sophisticated multi-agency response, which recognises the particular development needs of adolescents and the impact of adversity and traumatic experiences. At a national level, important progress has been made to help tackle the reasons why adolescents need a social worker. Through the new Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme we are supporting local areas to effectively protect vulnerable young people and through the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, we have developed and tested approaches to protecting young people from risks outside of the home.

We know that intervening early with effective targeted interventions that prevent problems escalating is important, and have committed £22 million to the Early Intervention Youth Fund and £200 million to the Youth Endowment Fund. Risk factors may be present beyond the home, but so too are protective factors – strengthening positive peer-to-peer relationships, social inclusion and networks, all are protective factors against exploitation and abuse. We are also supporting practitioners to develop

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[38] Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018

trusted relationships with children who have been exploited and abused through the £13 million Trusted Relationships Fund. Across Government, a new Youth Charter will be developed to set out a vision for young people over the next generation and beyond – including a pledge to review the youth work curriculum.

Government's understanding of how best to support adolescents is growing rapidly, and the review has helped to expand and deepen our understanding of how to address the most prevalent risks, and mitigate the impact on children's long-term outcomes. But there is further to go to ensure that all adolescents are effectively protected and supported.

7. Conclusion

Our evidence and findings throughout the Children in Need review provide an assessment of why these children's educational outcomes are so poor, and what is needed to improve them. Where our interim publication provides a guide in how children can best be supported, without delay, leaders and practitioners – in schools, social care, early help, health, police, and beyond – can start to put this into practice. This is not about schools taking on the role of other services, but about making sure everyone plays their part in supporting children. As the Department for Education, we will continue to act in support of spreading and scaling good practice, including by convening local authorities and schools to share what is working on the ground and based on the evidence that we will continue to develop.

A call to action:

- we want senior leaders in local authorities to promote educational outcomes as an important part of the role of social care and multi-agency working, and as an important progress measure for children who currently need a social worker

- we want school leaders to create a culture of high educational aspiration, and to be evaluating how this is being achieved, including through support that recognises and responds to the impact of children's experiences

- we want other Government departments to continue to work with us, in reflecting our understanding of the scale of children who have ever needed a social worker, and to prevent and tackle the drivers of need

In support of this, in concluding the review and led by the evidence developed through it, we are committing to pursue four areas of action – addressing what we have found are systemic challenges to good practice. The steps we are taking now are the right start, but will not be the end:

To increase visibility and recognition of these children in education, we will:

- continue to develop and improve the availability of data on children who have needed a social worker, including in relevant national statistics

- strengthen the expectation that local authorities should share, and schools should hold and use information about children currently needing a social worker, considering this as a matter of routine based on existing powers

- ensure that for children who have been identified as at risk, social workers are notified when children are excluded or moved out of school, working with local authorities and schools in how to best implement this in practice

To keep children in education, so that they benefit from the safety and security that this can offer, we will:

- commission new research on persistent absence, which will cover children who have needed a social worker

- improve the clarity, timeliness and transparency of the in-year admissions process, and strengthen the Fair Access Protocols, ensuring this can be used to admit children who currently need a social worker

- consider whether additional safeguards are needed for these children, as part of the planned consultation on arrangements around exclusions and alternative provision (following the Timpson Review of School Exclusions)

- through our new alternative provision workforce programme, determine whether more is needed to ensure expertise around adversity and trauma in alternative provision, and to address any gaps

To raise aspiration for children to realise their potential, we will:

- promote aspirational leadership in supporting both local authority Directors of Children's Services as part of an aspiring leaders programme, and education leaders, for example as part of a forthcoming review of Headteacher Standards

- take account of the review's findings in delivering a practice programme that embeds effective partnership working to support vulnerable children, between local authorities, schools and alternative provision, following the Timpson Review of School Exclusions

- explore whether there is a case for extending and adapting the Virtual School Head role

To ensure that children receive effective, evidence-based support in and around school, we will:

- in conjunction with the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, re-analyse the Education Endowment Foundation trials, publishing findings on their effectiveness for these children

- work with the EEF to support schools in making best use of pupil premium, including recognising these children as disadvantaged in education

- identify and bring together best practice in recognising and responding to childhood adversity, including its impact on mental health

- make sure that the training for new senior mental health leads in school includes understanding the needs of these children
- consult on strengthening the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, as part of changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance

In continuing to build the evidence base, we will:

- update our new longitudinal dataset annually, continuing to develop our understanding over time, and making this available to researchers
- work with the Education Endowment Foundation to see if the early language and literacy and Home Learning Environment trials in the North of England, which will be running by autumn 2019, can provide evidence of what makes a difference to children who currently need social worker
- learn from Change Projects being conducted by the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care to trial models of social workers in school, with interim findings expected in summer 2019 and final evaluations in 2020
- support academic research and analysis by the Rees Centre (University of Oxford) and the University of Bristol on the educational trajectories, attainment and progress of Children in Need and the factors related to positive outcomes by January 2020
- continue to work with the Office for the Children's Commissioner, building on links to their annual childhood vulnerability framework, which also seeks to make more visible the scale of children experiencing adversity

Thank you:

We are extremely grateful to the local authorities, schools, charities, academics, enterprises, and care-experienced young people and children, who have kindly hosted us and given us their time and knowledge over the last few months, as well as to all those who responded to our Call for Evidence.

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