



DEBATE PACK

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Supporting children in need into adulthood

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Summary

This House of Commons Library Debate Pack briefing has been prepared in advance of a debate entitled "Supporting children in need into adulthood". This will be led by Steve McCabe MP and will take place in Westminster Hall on Thursday 6 September 2018, starting at 3pm.

This briefing contains background information, parliamentary material, press articles, and further reading suggestions which Members may find useful when preparing for this debate.

When proposing this subject to the Backbench Business Committee on 10 July 2018, Steve McCabe [said the following](#):

As a bit of background to the argument, we know that as of 31 March last year, there were 389,430 children in England classified as children in need and receiving support from local authorities. Approximately 58,000 of those are youngsters aged 16 or 17. They share many of the features and characteristics of children in the care system, but the significant difference is this 18 cut-off point. Why are these children getting support and why are they in need? It can be a whole range of things: they can be victims of domestic violence; they may have mental health issues either on their own or with their parents; they may have suffered abuse or neglect; they may have been engaged in substance abuse; they may have caring responsibilities or they may have been subject to sexual or other forms of exploitation...

What we need to do is to explore rationally the kind of transition opportunities. We all know that we are living in a hard-pressed system and that resources are tight, but we have to think realistically about how we plan to assist the transition into adulthood, as an effort to try to make that path as reasonable as possible for those young people who are already at a disadvantage. If they are left hung out to dry, as it were, at the age of 18, they will almost certainly resurface in some part of the system, and may well demand a lot more resource and attention at that stage.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. Background

1.1 Children in need

The term “child in need” is a statutory term as set out in the [Children Act 1989](#) as amended (the “1989 Act”). Any child can be a “child in need”, even if they are living with their family.

There is no need for a court order to be made for a child to be determined as being in need. It is the role of a local authority’s children’s services department (formerly called social services) to assess and provide services in respect of children in need.

Being a child in need is not the same as being a “looked after child” (where a child is in local authority care further to a care order or provided with accommodation by the local authority under section 20 of the 1989 Act).

A child for these purposes is defined as someone who is under 18 years of age.

Section 17 of the 1989 Act defines a child in need as follows:

- a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part;
- b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
- c) he is disabled where “family” in relation to such a child includes “any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom he has been living”.

A number of terms used in section 17 are clarified as follows:

- “development” means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;
- “disabled” means if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed;
- “health” means physical or mental health

The Family Rights Group (FRG), a charity that works with “parents whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system and with members of the wider family who are raising children unable to remain at home”,¹ explains that: In practice, your child will be in need if:

- (i) they are disabled – this usually means they have a substantial disability; or
 - (ii) their health or development is being damaged, or soon will be, if they don't get extra support
- AND their needs are assessed as being severe or complex enough to meet your Local Authority threshold for help.²

Under the 1989 Act, “every local authority shall take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are children in need within their area”, as well as to publish information about the services it provides to children in need (and other groups) and to “take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that those who might benefit from the services receive the information relevant to them”.³

The Government has published [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), which is statutory guidance to all local authorities and others such as schools. The document states that “anyone who has concerns about a child’s welfare should make a referral to local authority children’s social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so”.⁴

As the legal practitioner text *Children Law and Practice* notes, “there is no guidance under CA [Children Act] 1989 as to who determines whether a child is ‘in need’”, adding that “it seems that if the criteria laid down [under section 17 of the *Children Act 1989*] are satisfied, then the child is a child ‘in need’”.⁵

In its *Working Together* guidance, the Government notes that safeguarding partners (i.e. the chief officer of police, the local authority, and the local clinical commissioning group) “should agree with the local authority and its partners the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered”. The safeguarding partners “should” publish a “threshold document” which, among other things, includes “the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children’s social care for assessment and for statutory services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need)”.⁶

Children Law and Practice states that:

Whether or not a child is ‘in need’ is a question for the judgement and discretion of the local authority, and appropriate respect should be given to the assessments of social workers, who have a difficult job in financially straitened circumstances. The local authority is entitled to draw inferences from the combination of (a) evidence that sources of support have existed in the past and (b) lack of satisfactory or convincing explanation as to why they will cease to exist in future.⁷

² Family Rights Group, [Family Support, factsheet 4](#), 23 March 2016, p10

³ *Children Act 1989*, Schedule 2, para 1

⁴ HM Government, [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), 1 August 2018, p17, para. 17

⁵ Hershman and McFarlane, *Children Law and Practice*, para F32

⁶ HM Government, [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), 1 August 2018, p16, para. 16

⁷ Hershman and McFarlane, *Children Law and Practice*, para F32

If an assessment determines that a child is in need, the Family Rights Group highlights the following points:

If the assessment says your child needs extra help from Children's Services as well as other agencies, the social worker and other professionals should agree a multi-agency plan of action and discuss this with you and your child. This should be discussed at a Child In Need planning meeting which you should be invited to. The plan should set out:

- What support will be given and who will give it
- How long this support will be given for
- What the aim of the support is
- What other agencies are expected to do
- How and when the plan for support will be reviewed.⁸

1.2 Support available for a child in need and their family

In cases where need is "relatively low level", then "individual services and universal services may be able to take swift action". However, for more "complex needs, help may be provided under section 17 of the *Children Act 1989* (children in need)".⁹

In addition to the services that local authorities provide for all children (such as family centres and recreational activities), the 1989 Act specifies the range of services that can be made available for a child in need:

- advice, guidance and counselling;
- occupational, social, cultural, or recreational activities;
- home help (which may include laundry facilities);
- facilities for, or assistance with, travelling to and from home for the purpose of taking advantage of any other service provided under the 1989 Act or of any similar service;
- assistance to enable the child concerned and his family to have a holiday;
- maintenance of the family home if the child is in need (but is not a looked after child) and is living apart from their family (in order to either to enable the child to live with their family, or to promote contact between the child and their family);
- day care for if the child is under 5 years of age but is not yet attending school;
- care or supervised activities (either outside school hours or during school holidays) for a child attending any school;
- providing accommodation to a child and their family;
- giving assistance in kind or in cash. The Family Rights Group notes that "practical help (including cash) for example help to buy essential equipment for children, food and other necessities or even help with housing costs. Each Children's Services department will have its own guidance about this form of help"¹⁰

⁸ Family Rights Group, [Family Support](#), factsheet 4, 23 March 2016, p19

⁹ HM Government, [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), 1 August 2018, p16, para. 13

¹⁰ Family Rights Group, [Family Support](#), factsheet 4, 23 March 2016, p20

Any service listed above (except day care or care or supervised activities) may also be provided to any member of the child in need's family, "if it is provided with a view to safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare".¹¹ In response to the question, "Can I decide what support my child gets?", the Family Rights Group notes:

Not exactly. Generally,¹² families don't have the right to insist on a particular type of support being provided and, in practice, final decisions on what help will be offered to meet the assessed needs of children in need, are often made at internal funding panels within Children's Services. You won't be invited to this meeting.¹³

1.3 Children in need numbers

The table below provides details of the number of child protection enquiries (Section 47 enquiries),¹⁴ episodes of children classed as in need and children who are subject to a child protection plan.

CHILDREN IN NEED STATISTICS, ENGLAND						
	Section 47 enquiries		Children in Need		Child protection plans	
	Enquiries during the year ending 31 March	Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	Number of episodes at 31 March	Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	Number of children with a plan at 31 March	Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years
2009-10	89,300	79.5	375,870	334.7	39,100	34.8
2010-11	111,660	99.0	382,410	339.0	42,710	37.9
2011-12	124,590	109.9	369,410	325.7	42,850	37.8
2012-13	127,060	111.2	378,600	331.4	43,140	37.8
2013-14	142,490	123.8	397,630	345.6	48,300	42.0
2014-15	160,150	138.2	390,960	337.3	49,690	42.9
2015-16	172,290	147.5	394,400	337.7	50,310	43.1
2016-17	185,450	157.4	389,430	330.4	51,080	43.3

[.Source: DFE Characteristics of children in need](#)

The number of section 47 enquiries and the number of child protection plans have increased year on year since 2009-10. The number of children in need has, by contrast, been more stable. At its lowest, it was 369,410 in 2012, and at its highest it was 397,630 in 2014. Similarly, the rate of children in need per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population has also remained relatively stable.

¹¹ *Children Act 1989* (as amended), section 17(3)

¹² "There are some circumstances when families do have a right to support for their children: - Families of eligible disabled children have a right to direct payments; and - Families of children with special educational needs who have an education, health and social care plan (EHC plan)) have a right to the support identified in the statement/plan for their children" [Family Rights Group, [Family Support](#), factsheet 4, 23 March 2016, p21]

¹³ Family Rights Group, [Family Support](#), factsheet 4, 23 March 2016, p21

¹⁴ Section 47 of the 1989 Children Act requires local authorities to investigate any circumstances where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm

1.4 Education

Department for Education review of children in need

The Department for Education is currently reviewing support for children in need, and their educational outcomes. In March 2018, it published data and analysis:

- DfE, [Children in need of help and protection: data and analysis](#), March 2018.

Among other findings, this reported that children in need are more likely than other children to become young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) after the age of 18.¹⁵ There is also a significant 'attainment gap' during the years of compulsory schooling which widens over the years.¹⁶

The DfE is currently [considering responses](#) to a call for evidence on examples of effective practice in supporting children in need. This call for evidence opened on 16th March 2018 and [stated](#):

We want to understand what it is that makes the difference to the educational outcomes of Children in Need in practice, how some Children in Need can achieve better educational outcomes than others, and what works in enabling Children in Need to achieve their potential.

We need to develop a stronger evidence base, going beyond the data to look at what is happening in practice. At different stages in a child's life, or when requiring different levels of statutory social care support, children's needs will require a different response. At each of these stages, a child may work with a variety of professionals who offer support to a child and to their family, to improve a child's circumstances.

Through the call for evidence, we want to understand how the work of professionals supporting Children in Need can make a difference to a child's educational outcomes. Specifically, we are interested in:

- how support is delivered or commissioned to help children
- how this support is measured and evaluated
- how this support influences educational outcomes

Children in Need are a legally defined group of children, assessed as needing help and protection as a result of risks to their development or health. This group includes children subject to Child in Need Plans, Child Protection plans, Looked After Children, young carers; and disabled children.¹⁷

¹⁵ DfE, [Children in need of help and protection, Data and analysis](#), March 2018, p42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p41.

¹⁷ Department for Education, [Children in Need of help and protection: Call for Evidence](#), March 2018

1.5 Former children in need who are disabled or have Special Educational Needs

According to the recent DfE research, around half of school-age children in need have special educational needs (SEND), compared to around 14% of the pupil population as a whole.¹⁸

In September 2014, a new system of SEND provision was introduced in England. The changes included the replacement of the old 'statements of SEN' and post-16 learning difficulty assessments (LDAs) with a new unified system of Education, Health and Care (EHC plans).

Under the reformed system, young people with SEND can be supported through an EHC plan until the age of 25, where they are staying in education, although there is no universal right to remain in education post-18. Where a local authority maintains an EHC plan for post-18 students, they have a statutory duty to arrange (i.e., pay for) the special educational provision set out in the EHC plan.

1.6 Support in further and higher education

Financial support

In England, young people in need aged 16-19 continuing in further education may be eligible for financial support, via the [16-19 bursary scheme](#). There are different schemes in [Wales](#), [Scotland](#), and [Northern Ireland](#).

There are two types of bursary: discretionary bursary and vulnerable student bursary. In order to qualify for the vulnerable student bursary a young person must be in one of the following groups:

- in care
- care leavers
- getting Income Support, or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself or are financially supporting yourself and someone who is dependent on you and living with you, for example, your child or your partner
- getting Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments and Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit. You must be getting both benefits in your own right.¹⁹

As the name suggests, discretionary bursaries are awarded by providers according to their own schemes (taking into account DfE guidance).

Young people who are also parents may be eligible both for a discretionary 16-19 bursary and [Care to Learn](#) childcare funding.

In higher education, post-18 students with additional support needs or caring responsibilities may qualify for extra funding in the form of:

- [Childcare Grant](#) - full-time students only

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p5.

¹⁹ Gov.uk web article, '[Advice for young people: 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide](#),' updated 14 March 2018.

- [Parents' Learning Allowance](#) - full-time students only
- [Adult Dependants' Grant](#) - full-time students only
- [University and college hardship funds](#)
- [Disabled Students' Allowances](#)

In general, higher education students' access to social security benefits is limited, but there are important exceptions to this.

1.7 Children's Society report: Crumbling Futures

In March 2018, the Children's Society published their report, [Crumbling Futures: Why vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds need more support as they move to adulthood](#). This found that "[i]ssues that young people referred to children's services as 16 and 17 year olds experience include domestic violence, mental ill health, drug or alcohol abuse and a risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and often a combination of these issues". It stated that "these risks and vulnerabilities are likely to remain, or in some cases intensify, as young people become young adults".

It also reported that "young people with the highest number of risk factors and vulnerabilities are less likely to report that they have resolved them as they reach adulthood". While care leavers are provided with extra support as they transition to adulthood, this report reflected that "there is no provision for extra support for young adults who were on the edges of the care system at the end of their 'childhood'".²⁰

It therefore proposed a variety of recommendations, including the following:

1. The Government must use the children in need review to propose changes for how 16 and 17 year olds who are children in need are supported into adulthood, to ensure that they are able to reach their full potential. This must address their education, health, housing, and employment needs as well as addressing safeguarding issues. Where they identify gaps in the evidence base, the review should set out an approach to delivering the additional research and analysis needed.

2. Children aged 16 and 17 years old who are referred to children's services should not be dismissed without an assessment of their needs, as even where they are not at immediate risk of harm they are likely to experience a number of disadvantages that will persist into adulthood. Local authorities should provide a holistic assessment of needs for this age, which should include a focus on risks, mental health needs, family relationships and risk of poverty.

3. Transition planning should be made a statutory requirement in every child in need and child protection plan for children aged 16 and 17. Young people should be given clear information and coordinated support to resolve the issues identified.

[...]

5. Local authorities should design and plan services around transition, and should consider the extension of key services – for

²⁰ Children's Society, [Crumbling Futures: Why vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds need more support as they move to adulthood](#), March 2018, pp7-8

example mental health services, homelessness support, support with access to education, employment and training – up to the ages of 25. This should be done in partnership with the voluntary sector and central government, based on learning from examples of what works in practice both in England and Wales, and internationally.²¹

In May 2018, Nadhim Zahawi, Minister for Children and Families, said the following in a [written PQ response](#):

We are interested in the recommendations of the Children’s Society Crumbling Futures report and welcome the focus on this area. The government is committed to preparing vulnerable children for adult life and we recognise the importance of the transition into adulthood.

We are pleased that the report welcomes the recent publications under the government’s Children in Need Review. The review is a priority for the government and a significant opportunity to review the support we offer vulnerable children to help them reach their potential. As part of the review we have published new data on the educational and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) outcomes for children in need.²²

1.8 ‘Staying Put’ for fostered young people

One example of a new form of support provided to young people in the care system for the transition into adulthood is that since 13 May 2014, local authorities in England have been obliged to facilitate, monitor, and support arrangements for fostered young people to stay with their foster families after the age of 18, and until the age of 21, if both parties agree. This was a result of part 5 Welfare of Children (98) of the *Children and Families Act 2014*.

This does not equate to an extension of a foster placement; the young person “staying put” would no longer be a looked after child and would be a young adult and care leaver. They would, however, be entitled to support as a care leaver.

[The Fostering Network](#), which campaigned for this, has [produced guidance](#) which provides what it describes as “a framework of best practice.”

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp12-13

²² [PQ 144403-07 \[Children: Disadvantaged\], 23 May 2018](#)

2. Parliamentary material

2.1 Parliamentary Questions

- [Children: Social Services](#)

Asked by: Lucas, Caroline | **Party:** Green Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how his Department incentivises local authorities' children's services to provide early help services that can prevent problems reaching crisis point.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

The department sets out the expectations for how local authorities should provide effective, evidence-based services to protect and promote the welfare of children in the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, which was updated on 4 July 2018 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>. Working Together to Safeguard Children states that it is better to provide services addressing needs early, rather than reacting later.

The department has invested nearly £200 million to support the development, testing and sharing of effective ways of supporting children who need help from children's social care services through the Children's Social Care Innovation programme. A number of projects have sought to provide interventions that reduce the risk of further escalation, and provide effective long-term solutions to children and families. Learning from these projects is published on the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme website at <http://www.innovationcsc.co.uk/>.

In addition, the department has contributed £550,000 this year alone to the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), one of the government's What Works Centres established in 2013. This funding will support the identification and dissemination of evidence based best practice in early help. More information about the EIF can be found on its website, at <http://www.eif.org.uk/>.

23 Jul 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 163787

Date tabled: 13 Jul 2018 | **Date for answer:** 17 Jul 2018 | **Date answered:** 23 Jul 2018

- [Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Gaffney, Hugh | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is he taking to support children in need.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

The government continues to implement its reform programme as set out in 'Putting Children First' (2016), towards our aim that all children, no matter where they live, should have access to the same high quality care and support to meet their needs. This includes stronger initial training and clarity about the knowledge and skills social workers need in their jobs and creating an environment where innovation can flourish and frontline practice is driven by evidence. The government is also taking decisive action to improve services in inadequate local authorities through our interventions programme and by implementing a new Improvement Strategy for local authorities at risk of failing.

The government recently launched a review of Children in Need, publishing extensive data on the outcomes of this cohort and launching a call for evidence, which closed on 1 July 2018. Through the Children in Need review we are continuing to build our evidence base – both on the educational outcomes of Children in Need, and on what works to improve these outcomes. To do this, we are engaging with professionals and organisations who support Children in Need and with three What Works Centres – the Education Endowment Foundation, Early Intervention Foundation, and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care.

10 Jul 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 159699

Date tabled: 02 Jul 2018 | **Date for answer:** 04 Jul 2018 | **Date answered:** 10 Jul 2018

- [Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Hardy, Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing transitional support for children in need as they reach adulthood.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

We are interested in the recommendations of the Children's Society Crumbling Futures report and welcome the focus on this area. The government is committed to preparing vulnerable children for adult life and we recognise the importance of the transition into adulthood.

We are pleased that the report welcomes the recent publications under the government's Children in Need Review. The review is a priority for the government and a significant opportunity to review the support we offer vulnerable children to help them reach their potential. As part of the review we have published new data on the educational and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) outcomes for children in need.

Alongside the new data we have launched a call for evidence to look at the support offered to children in need and asked the Education Endowment Fund and the Early Intervention Foundation to look at the evidence for what works to support these children and improve their

outcomes. This will help us assess the adequacy of the support children in need are given and to decide what steps should be taken to improve that support. We will consider any evidence we receive about transition support as part of the review.

It is important that children in need receive the right support throughout childhood to ensure they are ready for adult life. Therefore, we are continuing to implement our reform programme as set out in 'Putting Children First' with the aim that all children, no matter where they live, should have access to the same high quality care and support to meet their needs. This includes stronger initial training and clarity about the knowledge and skills social workers need in their jobs and creating an environment where innovation can flourish and frontline practice is driven by evidence. We are also taking decisive action to improve services in inadequate local authorities through our interventions programme and by implementing a new improvement strategy for local authorities at risk of delivering inadequate children's social care services.

23 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 144407

Date tabled: 15 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 17 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 23 May 2018

- [Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Frith, James | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the quality of transitions for children in need into adulthood.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |

Department: Department for Education

The government is committed to preparing vulnerable children for adult life and recognises the challenges and importance of transition. The statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children, makes it clear that when children on child protection plans reach the age of eighteen, local authorities should consider whether support services are still required. For children leaving care, the offer of support from local authorities now extends to twenty-five.

We are already delivering a major programme of reform, as set out in Putting Children First (2016). We are working to improve the quality of the workforce, develop and spread innovative practice, and improve the quality of local authority children's services. We are also using the Department for Education's Social Care Innovation Programme to trial programmes to improve the quality of support for adolescents.

On 16 March the government launched a review into the outcomes of children in need and opened a call for evidence. We will consider the full range of views we receive in response to the call for evidence, including any around transition support and the way this is planned by local authorities.

22 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 144977

Date tabled: 16 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 21 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 22 May 2018

- [Local Government Services: Children](#)

Asked by: Halfon, Robert | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness with which local authorities are discharging their statutory duties to children.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

Ofsted inspects local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children in care, and care leavers. These inspections focus on the effectiveness of local authority services, arrangements in discharging their statutory duties and the quality of leadership and management.

The department uses this inspection data and a range of other measures to assess the overall health of the system and the performance of individual local authorities. Current inspection data suggests that significant improvements are needed before the sector is working at a good level, though there has been some good recent progress.

'Putting Children First', published in 2016 sets out a clear approach to issues identified in the delivery of children's social care services across the country and we continue to deliver the measures proposed in it.

For individual local authorities, in particular those whose performance is deemed 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement to be good', the department works with the local government sector to drive improvements. We work with 15 'Partner in Practice' local authorities to develop excellence in children's social care services and to build capacity to support weaker councils to improve.

22 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 143747

Date tabled: 14 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 16 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 22 May 2018

- [Pupils: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Bradley, Ben | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the quality of pastoral support provided within the education system for 16 and 17 year olds identified as vulnerable.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

Schools and colleges are under a legislative duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As part of this duty, they must have regard to statutory safeguarding guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. Available

respectively at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>. The guidance sets out the steps that they must take and the systems that must be in place to provide support for children at each stage of their education. In the context of both guidance documents 'children' includes 16 and 17 year olds.

Ofsted inspectors report on whether or not arrangements for safeguarding and supporting children and learners are effective. Ofsted has published guidance to inspectors setting out the approach they should take to inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills-from-september-2015>. This makes clear that safeguarding is not just about protecting children and learners from deliberate harm and neglect and relates to broader aspects of care and education. Pupils' and students' personal development, behaviour and welfare is also a key area of focus in all inspections of education providers conducted under Ofsted's Common inspection framework.

We are clear in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' about the importance of early help assessments. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. These assessments should be undertaken by school and college staff for children, especially vulnerable children, aged 16 and 17 as appropriate to their local circumstances. Effective early help can prevent problems escalating. In some cases, however, the school or college may consider that the child is a child in need, as defined under the Children Act 1989, and make a referral to children's social care.

We are currently conducting a range of work to assess and improve the support children in need receive, including those experiencing mental ill-health, domestic abuse, exploitation or substance misuse. The children in need review and call for evidence, which was launched on 16 March, is looking at the educational outcomes for all children in need, including 16 and 17 year olds, and what support they need to improve those outcomes. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme is also funding projects to assess how early help and contextual safeguarding can help protect adolescents and prepare them for adult life.

16 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 142511

Date tabled: 09 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 11 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 16 May 2018

- [Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Evans, Mr Nigel | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to improve support and transitions into adulthood for children aged 16 and 17 years old who have been assessed as being in need and

are experiencing mental ill-health, domestic abuse, exploitation or substance misuse.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

The government is committed to preparing vulnerable children for adult life and recognises the importance of transitions into adulthood.

We are conducting a range of work to assess and improve the support Children in Need receive, including those experiencing mental ill-health, domestic abuse, exploitation or substance misuse. The Children in Need review and call for evidence, which was launched on 16 March, is looking widely at the educational outcomes for Children in Need, and what support they need to improve those outcomes.

The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme is also funding projects to assess how early help and contextual safeguarding can help protect adolescents and prepare them for adult life.

The government recognises the significance of specific issues which can affect all Children in Need, including those aged 16 and 17 years old and is taking action to protect and support children facing these specific issues. The government is currently consulting on a wide-reaching package of measures, legislative and non-legislative, to tackle domestic abuse, and has committed to legislation on this issue.

On exploitation, the Department for Education's communications campaign, 'Together We Can Tackle Child Abuse', focused earlier this year on educating the public to spot and report where children and young people were being sexual exploited.

On Mental Health, the new Mental Health Support Teams proposed in the government's Mental Health Green Paper will provide significant support to 16-18 year olds in schools and colleges. The Department for Education will also test how the teams can support vulnerable 16-18 year olds and other not in school or college such as those in apprenticeships and other work-based learning. Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Care are setting up a new national strategic partnership with key stakeholders focused on improving the mental health of 16-25 year olds by encouraging more coordinated action, experimentation and robust evaluation.

16 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 141697

Date tabled: 08 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 10 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 16 May 2018

- [Social Services: Children](#)

Asked by: McCabe, Steve | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report *Crumbling Futures* published by the Children's Society in March 2018, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that 16 and 17-year-olds

referred to children's services are receiving adequate support as they transition into adulthood.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

We welcome the findings in the Children's Society 'Crumbling Futures' report and agree that this is a difficult and important transition. The government is committed to ensuring that vulnerable children are ready for adult life and is taking action to ensure that services protect and support children. We recognise the importance of avoiding 'cliff edges' in support for the most vulnerable children and the offer of support from local authorities now extends to all care leavers up to 25. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' makes it clear that when children on Child Protection Plans reach 18, local authorities should consider whether support services are still required.

As a priority, we are taking forward a review of the educational outcomes of Children in Need. This review and call for evidence, which was launched on 16 March 2018, is looking at the quality of support provided to all Children in Need including 16 and 17 year olds. We will consider the full range of views we receive in response to the call for evidence, including any around transition to adult services.

We are delivering a major programme of reform to improve the support provided to Children in Need. As set out in 'Putting Children First' (2016), we are working to improve the quality of the workforce, develop and spread innovative practice, and improve the quality of local authority children's services. We are also using the Department for Education's Social Care Innovation Programme to trial programmes to improve the quality of support for adolescents, including assessing how early help and contextual safeguarding can help protect them from the specific threats they face.

A key finding of 'Crumbling Futures' is that the mental health needs of children and young people appear to be one of the main issues affecting older adolescents as they progress into adulthood. The new Mental Health Support Teams proposed in the government's Mental Health green paper will provide significant support to 16 to 18 year olds in schools and colleges. The Department for Education will also test how the teams can support vulnerable 16 to 18 year olds and other young people not in school or college, such as those in apprenticeships and other work-based learning. Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Care is setting up a new national strategic partnership with key stakeholders focused on improving the mental health of 16 to 25 year olds by encouraging more coordinated action, experimentation and robust evaluation.

15 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 142756

Date tabled: 10 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 15 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 15 May 2018

- [Children: Social Services](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much has been spent from the public purse under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 by public bodies in 2017-2018.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

Local authorities are not required to provide specific data regarding spend on children provided with support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. However, the Department for Education collects data on local authority spend on a range of services for children and young people.

The data table below shows local authority gross spend that may be on children in need but may also provide services to children not assessed as needing support under section 17. The data is for 2016-17. Data on local authority spend on children and young people services in 2017-18 will be published in autumn 2018.

	2016-17 (£000's)
Child Protection and Safeguarding	£2,334,268
Children's Centres and Other Spend on Children Under 5	£774,349
Family Support	£1,087,140
Other Children and Families Services	£87,175
Services for Young People	£447,532

Source: Section 251 Outturn

14 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 141026

Date tabled: 03 May 2018 | **Date for answer:** 08 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 14 May 2018

- [Pupils: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Timms, Stephen | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the quality of educational support provided to 16 and 17-year-olds in need of help or protection.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

On 16 March 2018, the government announced a programme of work to better understand how to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people with additional needs and challenges, so they are able to overcome barriers and realise their potential. This includes those who are 16 and 17 years old.

These children and young people perform less well at school on average, are at greater risk of being excluded and are overrepresented in alternative provision. This is an overlapping cohort whose needs are

often complex – many have special educational needs and disabilities (where support extends beyond 18, up to age 25), or are children in need of help and protection and so are supported through the social care system.

The programme consists of:

- Launching a review into the educational outcomes of and support for Children In Need;
- Carrying out an externally led review of school exclusions;
- Publishing our vision for reforming alternative provision, including the launch of a £4 million Innovation Fund.

As part of the review for children in need of help and protection, we have published new data and analysis, which offers initial insights into support provided in school for children in need who also claim free school meals, receive the pupil premium, and to meet special educational needs. This constituted new analysis, however, and the data did not include a breakdown by age.

To enable us to understand what support works in practice, we have announced a call for evidence of effective practice to improve educational outcomes for children in need. This will start to bring together and build the evidence of what support is currently being delivered both in and out of school, how its effectiveness is being measured and evaluated, and its influence on educational outcomes.

03 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 139348

Date tabled: 30 Apr 2018 | **Date for answer:** 03 May 2018 | **Date answered:** 03 May 2018

- [Pupils: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: McKinnell, Catherine | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department's review on the educational outcomes of children in need of help or support aged 16 and 17 will consider any other outcomes where the support those children have received may cause an effect.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

On 16 March 2018, the government published data and analysis as part of the Department for Education's Children in Need Review. This included the finding that Children in Need have worse educational outcomes than their peers from the early years, make less progress throughout school, and are more likely than other children to become a young adult who is Not in Education, Employment or Training three years after completing Key Stage 4.

The scope of the review is focussed on educational outcomes, and we have no plans to extend this. However, we recognise that the factors affecting these children and young people's educational outcomes, such as the support they receive, may also lead to other poorer outcomes. That is why our data publication sets out our intention to understand

the lifetime outcomes of Children in Need, including exploring the feasibility of matching the Department for Education's Children in Need data with data from other government departments.

Children's social care and schools have a central role in supporting Children in Need. It is therefore important for us to focus the review on what we can do now whilst making progress and working across government to understand more about other outcomes over the longer-term.

23 Apr 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 136545

Date tabled: 18 Apr 2018 | **Date for answer:** 23 Apr 2018 | **Date answered:** 23 Apr 2018

- [Pupils: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Godsiff, Mr Roger | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will expand the review into the educational outcomes of children in need of help or support to include the (a) employment, (b) housing and (c) health outcomes of that group of children.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

On 16 March 2018, the government published data and analysis as part of the Department for Education's Children in Need Review. This included the finding that Children in Need have worse educational outcomes than their peers from the early years, make less progress throughout school, and are more likely than other children to become a young adult who is Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) three years after completing Key Stage 4.

We have no plans to extend the scope of the review to consider long-term employment, housing or health outcomes. However we recognise that the factors affecting these children's educational outcomes may also lead to other poorer outcomes which is why our data publication sets out our intention to understand the lifetime outcomes of Children in Need, including exploring the feasibility of matching the Department for Education's Children in Need data with data from other government departments. Children's social care and schools have a central role in supporting Children in Need, it is therefore important for us to focus the review on what we can do now whilst making progress to understand more about other outcomes over the longer-term.

20 Apr 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 134841

Date tabled: 28 Mar 2018 | **Date for answer:** 16 Apr 2018 | **Date answered:** 20 Apr 2018

- [Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February to Question 125796, on vulnerable children, which professionals, schools and other experts have been consulted as part of the Government's scoping exercise; and what evidence has assessed during that work.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

The department's work in scoping a review of the outcomes of and support for Children in Need consulted a range of organisations and individuals, including from: sector representatives, children's charities, local children's services departments, primary and secondary schools, research organisations and related cross-government teams. This involved speaking to over 120 individuals, including more than 25 social workers, around 40 social worker leaders and around 40 school leaders. This engagement took the form of individual meetings, roundtables, participation in cross-government events and deep dive visits to local services in Birmingham, Solihull and Blackpool, as areas with different profiles of need.

In addition to the evidence provided by this direct consultation, the department considered emerging learning from projects funded through the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, reviewed academic literature, and assessed data collected through the annual Children in Need census.

07 Mar 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 130161

Date tabled: 27 Feb 2018 | **Date for answer:** 01 Mar 2018 | **Date answered:** 07 Mar 2018

- [Children: Disadvantaged](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2018 to Question 123221, when his Department plans to begin its review of children in need.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

The department has committed to undertake a review into children in need, to understand the needs of these vulnerable children.

Already, we are building an evidence base, including to address a critical challenge around how far children in need are currently supported through targeted and effective practice to reduce risk within families and prevent harm from escalating. To this end, the department has invested £6 million from the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme specifically to test targeted support for children in need.

Work has been underway within the department in order to scope the review, including through looking at the current evidence available and

speaking to professionals in children's social care and schools, and other experts.

We intend to complete this scoping exercise before beginning the review.

02 Feb 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 125796

Date tabled: 30 Jan 2018 | **Date for answer:** 02 Feb 2018 | **Date answered:** 02 Feb 2018

- [Children: Social Services](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the amount spent under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 by public bodies in each of the last five years.

Answering member: Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party |

Department: Department for Education

The Department for Education collects data on local council spending on a range of services for children and young people. Local councils are not required to provide separate data regarding spend on children provided with support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

The following local authority gross spend may be on children in need but may also provide services to children not assessed as needing support under section 17:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Child protection and safeguarding	£1,965,569	£2,026,366	£2,122,368	£2,226,843	£2,334,268
Early years and children's centres	£1,193,408	£1,053,716	£945,453	£843,954	£774,349
Family support	£973,056	£1,043,722	£1,078,865	£1,073,944	£1,087,140
Other children and families services	£110,534	£100,008	£86,959	£102,933	£87,175
Services for young people	£815,910	£712,771	£627,070	£527,980	£447,532

Source: Section 251 Outturn

19 Dec 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 118814

Date tabled: 12 Dec 2017 | **Date for answer:** 14 Dec 2017 | **Date answered:** 19 Dec 2017

- [Palliative Care: Children](#)

Asked by: Lord Carlile of Berriew | **Party:** Non-affiliated

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to commission a review into the consistency of regional commissioning of services families with children in need of palliative care.

Answering member: Lord O'Shaughnessy | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health

In July 2016, the Government set out its commitment to everyone at the end of life in the Government response to the independent *What's important to me. A Review of Choice in End of Life Care*. A copy of the Review is attached. *Our Commitment to you for end of life care: The Government Response to the Review of Choice in End of Life Care* (the Choice Commitment) set out what everyone should expect from their care at the end of life and the actions we are taking to make high quality and personalisation a reality for all, both adults and children, and to end variation in end of life care across the health system by 2020. A copy of the Government Response is attached. On 21 September 2017 we published *One year on: the government response to the review of choice in end of life care* setting out the good progress made in delivering this over the first year. A copy is attached.

Through the Mandate, we have asked NHS England to deliver the Choice Commitment, and working through NHS England's National Programme Board for End of life Care with all key system partners and stakeholders, including Together for Short Lives (TFSL), a range of activity is ongoing to achieve this. It is right that clinical commissioning groups have autonomy to shape services locally, and it is important that, where needed, more is done to provide them with tools, evidence, support and guidance to demonstrate the benefits of delivering the Government's vision for end of life care. NHS England, Public Health England and the Ambitions Partnership (comprising national organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors, including TFSL) have provided a wealth of support over the first year, including: currencies to improve transparency in specialist palliative commissioning; new guidance on cost effective commissioning; data about end of life care to assist Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STP) as they develop their plans for services; and seven evaluations of different approaches to 24/7 models of care.

Early in 2017, NHS England will be holding workshops with a range of STP leads to provide practical advice and support on developing effective end of life care services and demonstrating the value they can bring. In addition, TFSL has been commissioned by NHS England to promote the adoption of best practice approaches to children's that are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, and report back on barriers to implementation locally.

Date tabled: 27 Nov 2017 | **Date for answer:** 11 Dec 2017 | **Date answered:** 11 Dec 2017

- [Children: Disability](#)

Asked by: Burden, Richard | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to (a) health care and (b) social care for the families of disabled children.

Answering member: Jackie Doyle-Price | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health

Clinical commissioning groups must ensure that they secure health services to meet the needs of disabled children to a reasonable extent. The statutory framework introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014 requires clinical commissioning groups and local authorities to work together to support the needs of children with a special educational need and disability. Commissioners must publish a transparent 'local offer' of services available which has been developed for, and with, parents and young people. Since May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have been inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling their new duties for children and young people with special educational needs. NHS England is leading work to improve outcomes from commissioning of wheelchairs, including the National Wheelchair Data Collection, and the publication in July 2017 of a new service specification for wheelchair services.

Children's social care is the responsibility of the Department for Education. All disabled children are regarded as children 'in need' under the Children Act 1989 and may receive social care from the local authority. The Children and Families Act 2014 placed a duty on local authorities to assess whether a parent carer in their area has needs for support. A parent carer is defined as a person aged 18 or over who provides or intends to provide care for a disabled child for whom they have parental responsibility. An assessment must have regard to the parent carer's well-being, must consider whether it is appropriate for the parent carer to continue to provide care for the disabled child in light of the parent carer's needs for support, other needs and wishes, and must consider whether the parent carer has needs for support.

Local authorities also provide short break services for disabled children, sometimes known as respite care, which also give their families and carers time to do normal things and take rest from care responsibilities. In April 2011, the Government introduced a statutory duty for all local authorities to provide a range of short breaks services, to consider carers' needs in the design of these services and to publicise them clearly. While responsibility for funding short breaks rests with local authorities, the Department for Education has offered support and challenge and continues to consider how it can best support local authorities who are working to deliver sustainable short breaks provision.

11 Dec 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons |
116979

Date tabled: 01 Dec 2017 | **Date for answer:** 05 Dec 2017 | **Date
answered:** 11 Dec 2017

3. Press articles and notices

[Ofsted criticises council leaders for 'not making progress'](#)

Community Care, 31 August 2018

[Care services for vulnerable children in 'silent crisis,' new analysis shows](#)

Public Sector Executive, 20 August 2018

[Report of the Social Market Foundation's [recently published analysis](#) of children's services]

[We can't keep papering over the cracks. Vulnerable children need stable support](#)

The Guardian, 1 May 2018

[Support Is Falling Short For Vulnerable Older Teenagers](#)

The Huffington Post, 22 March 2018

[Blog authored by the Chief Executive of the Children's Society]

[Vulnerable teenagers 'abandoned' at 18, charity warns](#)

LocalGov, 21 March 2018

[Report of the Children's Society's findings in their report, [Crumbling Futures](#)]

[More than one in three care leavers ends up NEET](#)

TES, 20 March 2018

[DfE pledges to 'transform' alternative provision](#)

TES, 16 March 2018

[Review launched into educational outcomes of children in need](#)

Schools Week, 16 March 2018

[Vulnerable children forced into homelessness as local authorities routinely ignore child protection laws](#)

The Independent, 5 March 2018

[Vulnerable children in England 'falling through cracks' in social services](#)

The Guardian, 14 August 2017

[Report on [research by the charity, Action for Children](#)]

[Millions of children in England growing up in high risk environments](#)

The Guardian, 4 July 2017

[Children's social care services 'set to reach breaking point'](#)

The Guardian, 11 May 2017

[Report on [analysis published](#) by the Local Government Association]

4. Further reading

4.1 Commons Library briefings

- Commons Library Debate Pack CDP-2016-0002, [Children in Care](#), January 2016
- Commons Library briefing paper CBP-7730, [Local authority support for children in need](#) (England), October 2016

4.2 Government publications

- HM Government, [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), 1 August 2018
- Department for Education, [Children in need of help and protection, Data and analysis](#), March 2018
- Department for Education, [Children in Need of help and protection: Call for Evidence](#), March 2018
- Department for Education, [Children's services spending update](#), 28 November 2017

4.3 Stakeholder publications

- Children's Society, [Crumbling Futures: Why vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds need more support as they move to adulthood](#), March 2018
- Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), [A Country That Works For All Children](#), 11 October 2017
- Action for Children and National Children's Bureau, [Turning the Tide](#), November 2017
- Family Rights Group, [Family Support](#), factsheet 4, 23 March 2016

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