



Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State

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Sent via email: pubaccom@parliament.uk

Dear Meg,

I am pleased to announce that today the Government published its bold and ambitious plans to reform children's social care, **'Stable Homes, Built on Love'**, with the Children's Social Care National Framework, for consultation. This in response to three key reviews published last year: the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, The National Panel's report into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson and the Competition and Markets Authority report on the care placement market.

Children's social care has the potential to transform lives for the better. However, as the reviews set out last year, the system is sadly not delivering consistently enough for the children and families it supports. The reports emphasised the urgent need for whole system change to enable families to overcome challenges at the earliest stage; keep children safe and ensure that those in care have stable loving homes.

I am writing to all relevant Chairs of Select Committees to outline the six key pillars underpinning our strategy (held at the Annex) and highlight the relevant commitments, which will help us deliver them. Given the Public Accounts Committee's focus on ensuring the Department's investment delivers best for children in the social care system, we wanted to raise some of the measures we will be taking:

- We will introduce a Children's Social Care National Framework and Data Dashboard to set out our system outcomes and expectations for practice and align this with the work of Ofsted.
- We will use a pathfinder approach with selected local areas to test and learn how we deliver complex operational changes effectively, including a new integrated model of family help, child protection. A separate programme will path find Regional Care Cooperatives to plan, commission and deliver care places.

Our strategy is backed by £200 million of additional investment which will enable us to start delivering reform. Over the next two years, we will address urgent issues facing children and families, laying the foundations for whole system reform. After this, we will scale up tested and developed approaches and aim to bring forward legislation.

We have set out our plan for a programme of long-term reform. As I outlined in November in the House of Commons, our ambition is to build a system with love and family at its heart; I believe our strategy will set us on the path to fulfilling this. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you want any further detail.

I am grateful to those who led and contributed to these important reviews, including Josh MacAlister, Annie Hudson and the rest of the National Panel, and the Competition and Markets Authority. I also extend my sincere thanks to all the children, young people and their families, organisations and sector partners who contributed, including Select Committees.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian', with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State for Education

Annex – actions proposed under each pillar.

<u>Pillar</u>	<u>Government action</u>
1: Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children thrive within their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfind a new approach to Family Help. • Support the Family Help workforce including support to build their knowledge and skills. • Join up funding and strategy to ensure we have more systematic and strategic join up in how local areas are funded and supported to deliver effective services.
2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfind a more integrated and expert child protection response. • Consult on new National Multi-Agency Child Protection Standards. • Strengthen multi-agency leadership by amending guidance to Local Authorities, Police and Health, to be clearer on roles and responsibilities.
3: Unlocking the potential of family networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test how to implement reforms to family group decision-making and Family Network Support Packages; to help identify wider family members and empower them to support children and parents, using resources creatively to overcome financial barriers to support children at home. • Provide a training and support offer for all kinship carers in this Spending Review Period. • Publish a national Kinship Care Strategy by the end of 2023.
4: Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a fostering recruitment and retention programme. • Pathfind Regional Care Cooperatives to plan, commission and deliver care places. • Develop a programme to support improvements in the quality of leadership and management in the children's homes sector. • Introduce a financial oversight regime that will cover the largest providers of children's homes and fostering agencies. • Increase the leaving care allowance and the apprenticeships care leavers' bursary.
5: A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise high quality career development for social workers by delivering an Early Career Framework. Social Work England will also quality assure all initial education routes for social workers. • Boost social worker recruitment and explore ways to support the recruitment of up to an additional 500 child and family social worker apprentices nationally. • Improve social worker retention by supporting local authorities to retain their social workers, including improved working conditions and tackling workload drivers.
6: A system that continuously learns and improves, and makes better use of evidence and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a Children's Social Care National Framework to set out the outcomes children's social care should deliver, alongside a data Dashboard to support learning on outcomes. Practice Guides will set out the best evidenced approaches for achieving the outcomes. • Publish a data strategy by the end of this year, to improve the use of technology and data and establish a new children's social care data and digital expert forum. • Ensure inspection is aligned to the Children's Social Care National Framework. Work with Ofsted to rebalance how it looks at practice to ensure it acts as a lever for improvement, in line with the reforms.