

CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK BILL

Lord Nash introduced the Children and Social Work Bill into the House of Lords on 19 May.

The Bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to make sure that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. That is why we are proposing broad-ranging and far-reaching reforms to the children's social care system.

The Bill will build on the huge steps we have already taken to enable children in care to stay with their former foster families after they turn 18, to deliver a world-class adoption system and to support high quality training and development of social workers.

New measures in the Bill include:

- a new set of principles, clarifying how local authorities can promote and defend the interests of all looked after children and care leavers. The principles will provide a clear picture of what a local authority's role as a good 'corporate parent' looks like;
- a new requirement for local authorities to consult on and publish a local offer setting out the support available for care leavers in that area; and to ensure that all care leavers have access to a personal adviser up to age 25;
- more support for adopted children and children in long-term care at local authority and school level through extending the role of virtual schools heads and designated teachers;
- provisions to ensure that the needs of children are paramount in court decisions about their adoption or long-term care, which should take into account any harm they have suffered, the long-term plan for their upbringing, and their relationship with their prospective adopter;
- a new arrangement to enable local authorities to develop and trial more effective ways of delivering children's social care;
- a new central panel to review child safeguarding cases which raise issues which may lead to learning of national importance; and
- provision to enable the creation of a new body to regulate and improve the quality of the social work profession. Detailed arrangements will be set out in regulations which will allow the new body to set standards for social work training and practice and establish a robust regulatory system designed to raise standards and support continuous professional development. Measures here will apply to the whole social work profession, including adult social work.