Call for evidence

Written submissions

Inquiry overview

Children's social care is the system of support that children, young people and their families receive from their local authorities when they need extra help. The purpose of the system is to support these groups by addressing any problems early, intervening decisively when there is likelihood of harm, and to provide care for those who need it. However, there are a number of factors that impact the operational effectiveness of the overall social care system. The House of Lords Public Services Committee has therefore launched an inquiry in order to consider this topic in more detail.

The inquiry will examine a wide range of issues. These include system demand, key drivers for the increase in local authority spending, profiteering by private firms who provide services, the rise in families and children with complex needs and how these are met, shortages in foster carers, the effectiveness of residential care placements and the impact of unregistered illegal children's homes. The inquiry will also look at how the system is regulated and outcomes for care-experienced children.

General

1. How has demand for children's social care changed in recent years? How is it expected to change going forwards?

2. What are the key drivers of rising local authority spending on children's social care?

Residential care

3. To what extent is the supply of residential placements meeting the needs of, and delivering good outcomes for, care-experienced children?

4. What are the barriers to getting more suitable residential placements in the areas where they're needed?

5. What are the strengths and limitations of regional commissioning of residential care placements?

6. What impact will the market management measures in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act have on the children's social care market?

Foster care

7. To what extent is the foster care system meeting the needs of, and delivering good outcomes for, care-experienced children?

8. What are the key factors contributing to shortages of foster carers?

9. How effectively are kinship carers being supported?

10. What will be the impact of the 'Renewing Fostering: homes for 10,000 more children' strategy?

Workforce

11. What are the key challenges facing the children's social care workforce? What impacts are these challenges having on care-experienced children?

Unregistered homes

12. What are the key factors contributing to the continued use of unregistered children's homes? What risks do these settings potentially present to care-experienced children?

13. How effectively are system partners – including local authorities, private providers, Ofsted and the Department for Education – responding to the continued use of unregistered children's homes? What should they be doing differently?

Regulation

14. How effectively is Ofsted regulating and inspecting the children's social care sector, particularly in relation to (a) tackling the use of unregistered settings, (b) registering new children's homes and (b) collecting and publishing data on the sector? How will this change with Ofsted's new proposals?

Outcomes for care-experienced children

15. What factors have the greatest impact on outcomes for care-experienced children?

Annex: Guidance for submissions (for witnesses)

The questions in the call for evidence are intended to provide guidance for those who wish to offer their views. All submissions made through the written submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email. As the inquiry progresses, the Committee may narrow the inquiry focus to specific aspects of the topic. The Committee cannot accept anything that has not been prepared specifically in response to this call for evidence, or that has been published elsewhere.

Diversity comes in many forms and hearing a range of different perspectives means that committees are better informed and can more effectively scrutinise public policy and legislation. Committees can undertake their role most effectively when they hear from a wide range of individuals, sectors or groups in society affected by a particular policy or piece of legislation. We encourage anyone with experience or expertise of an issue under investigation by a select committee to share their views with the committee, with the full knowledge that their views have value and are welcome.

The deadline for submitting written evidence is 23.59 on Monday 26 October.

Further detailed guidance on the submission process for witnesses will be provided on the website.

Help and support

If you need help submitting your evidence, contact the Public Services Committee by email at hlpublicservices@parliament.uk

Start submission

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