

News story: Pilot launched to boost early language skills and cut teacher workload

Schools are set to pilot improved measures to support children's early development in language and vocabulary in the Reception year, making sure they have the skills needed to thrive at school.

From September, 25 schools across the country are set to trial revised Early Learning Goals, the key measures teachers use to decide how prepared children are to begin Year 1 at the end of Reception year. The changes are aimed at reducing teachers' workload to free up more time to support children's early skills and produce engaging lessons.

The pilot will help to address the problem of children arriving at school struggling with language and social skills, helping to close the so-called 'word gap' – the gap between disadvantaged children's communication and that of their peers when they start school.

They mark the first step of a full consultation process working closely with the early years sector, following the Government's commitment to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in response to the Primary Assessment consultation last September.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

We want to improve education for every child and the early years in a child's life are critical in laying strong foundations for future success. That is why we want to free up more time for Reception teachers to interact with their pupils, and make sure they are developing the rich vocabulary, skills and behaviours they need to thrive at school and in later life.

The schools taking part in this pilot will help test these proposals, designed to cut down the burden of paperwork that exists with the current system. Teachers have the best understanding of their pupils, so it's absolutely right that we empower them to use and trust their own professional judgment based on what they see.

The proposals will help reduce teacher workload, in response to feedback from teachers during the consultation that they feel pressured to collect multiple pieces of evidence that justify their own observations of how a child is progressing.

Ed Vainker, Principal at Reach Academy Feltham, said the following:

The Early Years are a critical time, especially for the most vulnerable children, where teachers have an opportunity to avoid an achievement gap developing. These proposals provide a welcome focus on speech, language and communication and confirm that teacher judgment, rather than onerous evidence collection, is expected.

Jan Dubiel, National Director of Early Excellence, said:

I am pleased that the Department is engaging in such a thorough and robust consultative process in developing these reforms. I applaud the fact that they are ensuring that the proposals are tested and shaped by the actual reception teachers who will use the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. This will ensure the reforms are informed by best practice and the expertise of practitioners – especially Reception teachers – themselves.

The new Early Learning Goals remain in the spirit of the original, internationally renowned Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), focusing on the core skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviours that children need in order to thrive and develop successfully – and I am confident this has the potential to result in positive changes and ensure that practitioners continue to deliver in a holistic approach to children's learning and development.

Lauren Costello, National Director of Primary and SEND at The Academies Enterprise Trust, said:

Today's proposals represent a really positive move forward to build on the already great practice that exists in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As someone who works in the EYFS and primary sector on a national scale and across a wide range of socio and economic settings, I can clearly see a real commitment in these new Early Learning Goals to focus on key things that every child should know, master and have confidence in during their vital early years education.

The new Early Learning Goals will be especially helpful for EYFS teachers working with those who may have gaps in their very early life experiences and will allow these very talented practitioners to quickly identify and addresses these gaps and fix them. I am particularly pleased to see that the relentless focus on providing solid foundations for children's reading is a prominent feature within the new Early Learning Goals.

The pilots build on two schemes [announced](#) by the Education Secretary in April that will improve children's early language and literacy skills at home before they start school. These include £5 million with the Education

Endowment Foundation (EEF) to trial projects that offer parents practical tools and advice on learning new words with their children, and an £8.5 million programme open for councils to fund projects that help disadvantaged children's language and literacy.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is carried out in the final term of Reception year, and is a summary of a child's development that year against 17 Early Learning Goals. These look at each child's development across a broad range of skills including language and communication, reading and writing, numbers, art and design, physical development, self-confidence and ability to build relationships, and understanding of the world.

The reforms to the Profile will cut down the administrative burden required of teachers, freeing them up to spend more time teaching, interacting with and supporting their pupils so that they are prepared to move on to Year 1.

The Department for Education has worked extensively with teachers, unions and experts from across early years, schools and child development to ensure proposals are based on the latest evidence and reflect feedback from practitioners.

James Bowen, Director of NAHT Edge, the union for middle leaders, said:

We are pleased to see that the government has prioritised reducing teacher workload as part of these reforms. Excessive evidence gathering, especially for moderation purposes, has for too long been a major burden for many reception class teachers. We hope that these reforms mean that reception teachers are freed up to focus more on the core business of teaching and learning.

We also welcome the message that this is a genuine pilot. We are pleased that schools themselves will be able to directly shape the development of this policy and ensure that government have clear feedback before any decisions are taken on a potential national roll-out.

The pilot will be evaluated by the Education Endowment Foundation and Action for Children, and proposals will be refined ahead of a full public consultation based on feedback from the schools involved in the pilot and from experts and practitioners.

Today's announcement is part of wider plans to improve education at every level of the system and will build on the progress already being made in schools across England, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 and the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowing.

Edward Melhuish, research professor at the University of Oxford, said:

Children need to have good language development in the pre-school

years. Our research shows that where that happens we see children do better in school, socially and emotionally, and these benefits last through to adulthood.

The new Early Learning Goals rightly prioritise good language development but also cover the full range of children's development, and they provide a basis for all preschool settings to provide the experiences children need for good development that will show long-term benefits. The new Early Learning Goals will be helpful to all concerned with children's well-being.

Schools were invited to be part of September's pilot based on a range of criteria including location, size, Ofsted rating and free school meal eligibility. Those who expressed interest were chosen to ensure a good balance in the pilot. Those taking part in the pilot will be exempt from elements of the existing profile while they test a revised version.

This is backed by a wider package of reform, set out in the Government's response to the Primary Assessment consultation, which includes the introduction of a [Reception Baseline Assessment](#).

The revised Early Learning Goals being piloted are available on the [Foundation Years](#) website.

[Government response: Russian briefing on Syria chemical weapons use, 21 June 2018: UK response](#)

The Russian MFA's briefing today on chemical weapons in Syria included unfounded criticisms of the OPCW's independent and objective investigations in Syria.

It is well known that the Syrian regime has a long history of using chemical weapons against its own people. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism was set up by the UN Security Council in 2015 to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria. Russia agreed to the working and investigative methods of the JIM.

The JIM has confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria by the Syrian regime on four separate occasions. Despite this clear evidence, the international community has been unable to respond due to repeated Russian vetoes at the UNSC.

A significant amount of information indicates that the Syrian regime was also

responsible for the chemical weapons attack in Douma. An independent OPCW report is due to be published soon.

We hope that Russia will constructively cooperate with the OPCW investigation into Douma, rather than disrupt and undermine. Russia has a right to submit any relevant evidence to the OPCW for independent analysis.

It is vital all countries work together constructively to ensure the Chemical Weapons Convention is upheld.

Press release: Government proposal to move claimants on 'legacy' benefits to Universal Credit: consultation announced

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) has today launched a public consultation on proposals for moving all existing claimants of a working age income-related benefit to Universal Credit.

From next year DWP will begin the process of moving claimants in receipt of one or more of the following benefits to Universal Credit:

- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit

The wide-ranging draft legislation, which was presented to the committee for scrutiny at its meeting on 20 June 2018, sets out the government's proposals on:

1. requirements for claimants on existing benefits to make a claim for Universal Credit (including the deadlines for doing so) and arrangements for ending their existing benefit
2. the calculation, award and ongoing treatment of transitional protection

The task of safely moving around 3 million claimants (in around 2 million households) from legacy benefits to Universal Credit raises important questions about the delivery challenge facing the department and the

potential impact on claimants.

SSAC has therefore decided to examine this draft legislation, and the impacts that flow from it, in more detail. To help inform this work, the committee would welcome evidence from a broad range of organisations and individuals who have good insight into and/or experience of the following aspects of these proposals:

- the overall migration timetable
- arrangements for contacting claimants and inviting claims from them
- issues associated with making a claim, and ending legacy benefit claims
- the calculation of transitional protection (including the treatment of earnings and capital)
- the impact of proposed transitional protection (including how easily it will be delivered and the degree to which it will be understood by claimants)
- the impact on workers, including the self-employed
- equality impact (whether there will be particular effects for different groups and how these can best be addressed), for example are there any groups that will not be covered by transitional protection?
- monitoring and evaluation

The committee would welcome responses to ensure that its advice to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is informed by a range of perspectives. The committee would welcome real or hypothetical case studies or specific examples as part of that evidence.

Paul Gray, the committee's Chair, said:

The planned rollout of Universal Credit is now reaching its most critical and challenging stage. The government's draft proposals involve major issues on both detailed entitlement rules and delivery logistics, and are due to be debated in Parliament later this year. SSAC is keen to ensure that the scrutiny report it submits to ministers and Parliament is as well informed as possible, and we therefore strongly encourage all organisations and individuals with relevant evidence to take part in this consultation process.

Please note that we are not consulting on the government's overarching Universal Credit policy, which is enshrined in primary legislation following Parliamentary scrutiny during the passage of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Comments on this will not be considered.

Responses should be submitted to the Committee Secretary by no later than 10am on Monday 20 August:

The Committee Secretary
Social Security Advisory Committee
5th Floor

Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Alternatively responses can be emailed to – ssac.consultation@ssac.gsi.gov.uk

SSAC is an independent advisory body of the Department for Work and Pensions. The committee's role is to give advice on social security issues; scrutinise and report on social security regulations (including tax credits) and to consider and advise on any matters referred to it by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions or the Northern Ireland Department for Communities.

The committee's Chair is Paul Gray. Its membership comprises: Bruce Calderwood, David Chrimes, Carl Emmerson, Chris Goulden, Philip Jones, Jim McCormick, Grainne McKeever, Dominic Morris, Seyi Obakin, Judith Paterson, Charlotte Pickles, Liz Sayce and Victoria Todd.

Most social security regulations come before SSAC for scrutiny, the only significant exceptions being regulations which go to other advisory bodies or set benefit rates. When SSAC has considered regulations which it has asked to be formally referred, its response is made in the form of a report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. That report must be presented to Parliament when the regulations are laid with a statement from the Secretary of State showing what has been done (or is intended to be done) about the SSAC's recommendations (section 174(1) and (2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992).

Further enquiries should be directed to Denise Whitehead, Committee Secretary, on 020 7829 3354.

[News story: Britain leads first ever European conference on veterans mental health](#)

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood hosted the conference, which included delegations from Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

The conference, the first meeting of its kind, saw Ministers and military officials from six NATO countries share best practice on veterans issues and discuss how nations can further mental health support for former service personnel.

Opening the conference, Mr Ellwood outlined to delegates that while most veterans go on live happy, healthy and successful lives, all Governments had the responsibility to look after the mental health of those who have served.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

In order to recruit the next generation of soldiers, sailors and airmen and women, we need to show that we look after our service personnel and veterans.

Britain is not unique in facing this challenge. That's why it's vital that we discuss these issues and share best practice with our close European military partners.

Tobias Ellwood with delegations from Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands.

At today's meeting, Mr Ellwood addressed the need to counter the negative perceptions of veterans. He told the conference that while more needs to be done to help veterans, it's unhelpful that, despite statistics which prove otherwise, many people think that service life leaves people damaged.

Figures released today show that rates of mental disorder amongst serving armed forces personnel (3.1%) remain slightly below those of the general population (3.5%). Rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder also remain low, with 2 in every 1000 personnel assessed with having the disorder in 2016/17.

Every study conducted by the Ministry of Defence has also found that the risk of suicide among the Armed Forces community, including veterans of the Falklands conflict and the Gulf War, is lower than amongst the general population. The UK regular Armed Forces male rate of suicide for 2017 is 8 per 100,000. The UK general population male rate in 2016 was 19 per 100,000.

Support on offer

The Ministry of Defence is now spending some up to £220 million over the next decade to improve mental health services for serving personnel.

While the provision of veterans' healthcare is the responsibility of the NHS in England and the Devolved Administrations, the MOD is working closely with all relevant government departments to make sure the unique needs of veterans are addressed.

Veterans in England, Scotland and Wales receive priority access to NHS specialist care for conditions stemming from their military service.

Last year the government created a Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, to coordinate and address veterans specific issues across all relevant government departments. The board will be presented with the first ever

veterans strategy in the autumn

In 2017 the Veterans Gateway was also launched, providing a single point of contact for veterans, service personnel and their families to get the right information advice and support 24/7. The MOD provides £2 million to fund the helpline.

[Check and update your charity details](#)

From 12 November 2018, the first time you [log in to your online account](#) to do your annual return or update your charity details you will need to check and confirm your charity details are correct, or update them if needed.

This [guide explains what information is covered by the service](#) (ODT, 139KB) so you can collect information before you log in. It also explains which information will be available to the public on the charity register.

The service will:

- guide you through 6 separate pages that show all your charity details
- highlight where you have missing information that needs to be provided to us (this will be tailored to your charity depending on how up to date your details are on the register)

You will be able to save your information and return back to the service if needed. When all the missing information has been provided on each page, and you confirm details are correct, you will be able to continue to submit your annual return.

You only need to provide missing information the first time you log in to do your annual return, or update your charity details (from 12 November 2018). When you need to update your charity details in future you can choose which sections or information to edit and update.

Trustees of all charities have a legal obligation to keep the details on the charity register accurate and up to date. This helps maintain public trust and confidence in the charity sector and enables us to contact you with important regulatory information.

There have also been some other changes to this service, which are explained below.

Changes to public display names for trustees

Trustees will not be able to add a public display name on the charity register. Their full legal name will show to the public.

This is because charity trusteeship is a serious responsibility. Trustees have independent control over, and legal responsibility for, a charity's management and administration. They need to be accountable to the public.

If trustees have been granted a dispensation for their legal name not to be displayed to the public on the register, this will be retained. There will be no need to apply for a dispensation again.

You need to check that the details for your trustees remain up to date. This includes adding any new trustees and their contact details.

You must make sure that each person named is not [disqualified from acting as a trustee](#).

You will need to remove the details of any trustees who are no longer involved with your charity.

When you update trustee details, if they are linked to other charities the changes will take effect across all other charity entries too. This will help to keep the register accurate and reduce duplicate entries.

Trustees will also need to provide their home address and telephone number. This helps with validating the identity of trustees. No trustee contact details or home addresses will be shown to the public.

Changes to email addresses

All trustees will need to provide their email address, or confirm that they do not have one.

We will use this email address to contact trustees about their charity. The address that is provided will be applied to all their entries on the register.

We will only contact trustees by email if we are handling a case about your charity, or to provide regulatory alerts and updates to help you to run your charity effectively.

We will not send you unsolicited email, marketing materials or anything outside of our regulatory remit.

Changes to bank account information

You will need to provide details of all your charity's UK bank/building society accounts. This information will not be available to the public.

We will use the information to make sure that charities are protecting and managing their funds appropriately, where we need to. Trustees have a duty to act responsibly, reasonably and honestly and protect charity funds and assets so that they are only used to support or carry out its purposes.

Working inside the regulated banking system is the best way to achieve this.

Holding a bank account also aids with transparency providing an audit trail and records, such as bank statements.

Data processing

You can read [our privacy notice](#) which explains how we process data when you update or change your charity details.