

New push to improve outcomes for vulnerable children

Vulnerable children in every school across the country will benefit from a dedicated school leader to ensure they attend and achieve, under new plans published today.

A consultation launched today will introduce changes to the role of Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools so that they have a greater focus on improving the academic achievement of children on the edge of care, as part of their existing safeguarding duties.

The proposals will specifically help children that experience challenges outside of school, which may contribute to poor attendance, poor behaviour and disengagement in lessons. This includes sharing information about how children's circumstances are impacting on their education and supporting school staff to find effective ways of teaching these children and maintaining a culture of high aspiration for them.

The plans come in response to recommendations from the [Children in Need review](#), and are aimed at helping the 1.6 million children who have needed help and protection from a social worker at some point in the last six years. These children have worse outcomes than their peers, and often miss out on education, being three times more likely to be persistently absent from school and two to four times more likely to be permanently excluded.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

We know that on average, three children in every classroom need a social worker. We also know that far too many of those children fall behind, which is why I am determined to be ambitious for these children and ensure they are seen, safe and able to succeed.

Teachers and social workers are some of the most dedicated professionals in society, delivering for children up and down the country. But I do not want any child to slip through the cracks, which is why we are consulting on having a dedicated senior leader in schools to make sure schools know who their vulnerable children are, set high aspirations for them and put in place the right support so they can achieve.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is currently responsible for coordinating the safeguarding of children, making sure staff across a school understand signs of child abuse and neglect, as well as referring concerns to children's social care when appropriate.

The Department for Education will also be consulting on what is needed for Designated Safeguarding Leads to provide this help, in terms of resources,

training and support, to be introduced from this September.

The changes come following a review last year, which revealed children who need a social worker have worse outcomes at every stage of their education which persist even after social care involvement has ended. Children who have needed help and protection from social care services are 50 per cent less likely to achieve a strong pass in English and maths GCSEs and on average two to four times more likely to be excluded than their peers.

Dr Sam Royston, Director of Policy and Research at The Children's Society, said:

Children who are on the edge of the care system can struggle at school as much as children in care, and it is fantastic to see the government recognise the importance of dedicated extra support to help them succeed academically. It's vital that this support focusses not only on their grades, but also on their well-being and personal development. This will require additional investment in the pupil premium so schools have resources to provide the right help. Support for vulnerable children mustn't stop the school gates and it's crucial that the underlying issues affecting their lives are addressed as well.