



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-0106, 16 October 2020

Support for children and families during the Covid-19 outbreak

By Philip Loft, David Foster, Aaron Kulakiewicz

Summary

On Tuesday 20 October at 9.30 am there will be a debate in Westminster Hall on "Support for children and families during the Covid-19 outbreak". The debate will be led by Danny Kruger MP, Fiona Bruce MP and Tim Farron MP.

Although evidence suggests that many children may have had a positive experience of aspects of the coronavirus outbreak, concerns have been raised regarding the impact on some children and families, particularly those already vulnerable or disadvantaged.

It is suggested that the full impact on such families may only become apparent as schools and support services begin to re-open. This, in turn, has led to concerns about the pressure that local authority children's services and other support services may face from an increase in demand. Stakeholders, including the Children's Commissioner and the Local Government Association, have urged a focus on children as part of the recovery.

As part of its response to Covid-19, the Government has provided significant additional funding to organisations supporting vulnerable children and families, including £4.7 billion to local authorities.

As well as providing brief information on these issues, this Commons Library Briefing also includes a brief outline of the Troubled Families Programme and the development of Family Hubs, both of which were the subject of commitments in the 2019 Conservative Party manifesto.

Related Library briefings on the [Troubled Families Programme](#), [Early Intervention](#) and [Local authority support for children in need](#) also include relevant material.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Contents

1. Background	2
1.1 Impact of coronavirus outbreak on children and families	2
1.2 Impact on support services	4
1.3 Government funding for support services during pandemic	5
1.4 Troubled families programme and family hubs: recent Government policy	7
2. UK Parliament Proceedings	9
2.1 Debates	9
2.2 Parliamentary Questions	9
3. Press Articles	19
3.1 Press releases	19
3.2 News articles	19
4. Reports	21

1. Background

1.1 Impact of coronavirus outbreak on children and families

There is evidence to suggest that many children may have had positive experiences of aspects of the coronavirus outbreak, such as the opportunity to spend more time with their family during the national lockdown. For example, on 10 October 2020, the Department for Education published a [report](#) collating evidence on wellbeing in children and young people over the period of March to August 2020. The report stated that the data collected gave “a surprisingly positive picture of the wellbeing and experiences of the majority of children and young people at this time.” Overall and on average, the report added, children and young people have had quite stable personal wellbeing during the pandemic, and children’s happiness with their family has remained high, on average.¹

Concerns have, however, been raised regarding the impact of the pandemic on some children and families, particularly those already vulnerable or disadvantaged. Indeed, the DfE report cited above noted that much of its data is about children and young people on average as a whole, “which can overlook the experiences of subgroups and those outside the average.” There are indications, it added, “that children and young people with particular characteristics may have experienced lower subjective wellbeing.”²

The concerns raised have included (the reports included in section 4 of the briefing provide more detailed commentary):

- That school closures will lead to a **worsening of the education disadvantage gap**.³ Further information is provided in the Library Briefing: [Coronavirus and schools: FAQs](#).
- That the closure of schools and changes to duties concerning EHC Plans meant that **some children with special educational needs may not have their needs fully met**. (Although vulnerable children and children with EHC Plans were permitted to attend school throughout the lockdown, figures suggest that only a small minority did so). There are also concerns that pupils with special educational needs may struggle more with the return to school.⁴
- That the lockdown **left some children at more risk of harm**, with at-risk children less visible as schools and other services closed. The number of children referred to children’s services

¹ Department for Education, [State of the nation 2020: children and young people’s wellbeing](#), October 2020, pp11-16.

² As above.

³ Sutton Trust, [COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown](#), April 2020.

⁴ Children’s Commissioner, [Childhood in the time of Covid](#), September 2020, pp7-9.

between the end of April and the middle of June was 18% lower than over the past three years.⁵

- **Family life has become more challenging for many;** domestic abuse helplines have reported an increase in calls and the NSPCC saw an increase in the number of people calling with concerns about children suffering abuse and neglect.⁶ Survey data from the end of May suggested that, while the majority of parents reported that family relationships had strengthened or stayed the same, over 500,000 children were living in homes where the parent-child relationships had worsened.⁷
- That **gangs used lockdown as an opportunity to increase 'recruitment activity'**, "taking advantage of young people's increased vulnerability, boredom, and time spent online."⁸
- That the withdrawal of support, the inability to see friends and the stress on wider family life could particularly **impact some children's mental health and wellbeing.**⁹
- That many low-income families have seen a significant **deterioration in their living standards.**¹⁰
- That **young carers have been put under additional strain**, with over half reporting caring for longer than before the start of the pandemic.¹¹

At the same time as some children and families have faced greater stresses, there have been significant changes to how formal and informal support is accessed. Schools, nurseries, youth clubs and sports clubs have been closed to most children for significant periods of time. In addition, many services, including health visitors, GPs, day centres, children's centres and family hubs, have often moved their services online, changed the services they offer or, in some cases, closed their doors entirely.

Informal support has also been reduced for many as a result of the restrictions on meeting family and friends (for example, it is only recently that an exception has been included to allow for the provision of informal childcare by both grandparents).¹²

In her September 2020 report, [Childhood in the time of Covid](#), the Children's Commissioner concluded that the coronavirus outbreak has had a "widespread, profound and ongoing" impact on children and their families:

Even before the crisis, there were 2.2 million children in England living in households affected by any of the so-called 'toxic trio' of

⁵ Department for Education, [Vulnerable Children and Young People Survey: Summary of returns Waves 1 to 4](#), August 2020, p3.

⁶ Local Government Association, [A child-centred recovery](#), 10 September 2020; NSPCC, [How safe are our children? 2020](#), August 2020, p3.

⁷ Children's Commissioner, [How lockdown has affected children's lives at home](#), August 2020.

⁸ As above, p11.

⁹ Reachwell, [COVID-19 Lockdown: A Child and Adolescent Mental Health Crisis](#), 9 July 2020.

¹⁰ Child Poverty Action Group, [POVERTY IN THE PANDEMIC: The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children](#), August 2020.

¹¹ Local Government Association, [A child-centred recovery](#), 10 September 2020.

¹² For more information, see Library Briefing 8872, [Coronavirus: Childcare FAQs](#), 25 September 2020.

family issues: domestic abuse, parental drug and/or alcohol dependency, and severe parental mental health issues.

After months of national anxiety, the stripping back of key support services and an emerging economic recession, the impact of lockdown on children is only just starting to become clear. Children can be both resilient and adaptable, but they can't do this on their own, and the crisis has shown how few resources some children – and their families – can rely upon when things go wrong.

Some children enjoyed aspects of lockdown. For example, families whose incomes remained stable, perhaps as a result of the furlough scheme, often found that they had more quality time to spend with one another, and some children became less stressed as a result of a break from the regular rhythms of everyday life. But for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, the story has been very different.

In short, Covid-19 has exposed and then amplified existing inequalities facing children, meaning those children already facing the worst life chances have felt the greatest burden from the virus and our response to it.¹³

The report recommended that there needs to be a “comprehensive recovery package for children to mitigate the damage caused by the crisis thus far”, with families able to access support before they reach crisis point:

Families who are struggling need to be enabled to access help and support within their communities, before they reach crisis point. This must mean greater investment in local authority early help services, the Troubled Families programme and health visitors. All of these services should be brought together in local Family Hubs, which should become core assets in every community.¹⁴

Similarly, in its September 2020 report, [A child-centred recovery](#), the Local Government Association, argued that there needs to be “A cross-Whitehall strategy that puts children and young people at the heart of recovery.”¹⁵

1.2 Impact on support services

It has been suggested that the impact of the pandemic on the lives of vulnerable children and their families will only become fully apparent as schools, early years provision and other services re-open, with this likely manifesting in a rise in referrals to children's services and in increased demand for universal support services.¹⁶ This has, in turn, given rise to concerns about the pressure this may put on such services.

In its [submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020](#), the Local Government Association argued that local authorities in England require an additional £10.1 billion per year by 2023/24, including £1.9

¹³ Children's Commissioner, [Childhood in the time of Covid](#), September 2020, p27.

¹⁴ As above, p28.

¹⁵ Local Government Association, [A child-centred recovery](#), 10 September 2020.

¹⁶ Early Intervention Foundation, [The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services: Written evidence submitted to the Education Committee inquiry by the Early Intervention Foundation](#), 11 June 2020.

billion for “services struggling under increased demand”, such as children’s social care.¹⁷ The submission added:

As the medium- and long-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic become apparent, more children and their families are likely to need support. In our publication, *A Child Centred Recovery*, we highlight evidence around the likelihood of increased demand on children’s services as a result of the pandemic – including issues related to domestic abuse, mental health, poverty and substance misuse, the most common reasons for children and families needing help from children’s social care.

Some children and families will need significant interventions, including child protection plans or even coming into the care system. But for many, they will just need some extra help to get through a difficult period. That could be low level mental health support, sessions with a youth worker, understanding how to support children showing difficult behaviours, or working through parental conflict.¹⁸

The Department for Education (DfE) has established a survey of local authorities to help understand the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on children’s services, with local authorities asked to report to the DfE every two weeks (each fortnightly return is referred to as a ‘wave’). [The most recent report on the surveys](#) was published on 14 October and covers the first ten waves. The report’s key findings included:

- The total number of referrals to children’s services during wave 10 (7-13 September) was 6% lower than usual at that time of year. This follows a higher number of referrals than the usual number at that time of year in waves 8 and 9 (+10% and +12% respectively).
- The total number of referrals reported in waves 1 to 10 was around 13% lower than the same period over the last three years.¹⁹

The DfE is additionally collecting data on the impact Covid-19 is having on local authority finances. The [most recent data](#) shows that between March and August children’s services in England incurred an additional £164 million of spending.²⁰

1.3 Government funding for support services during pandemic

During the course of the pandemic, the Government has provided substantial additional funding for support services for children and families. This includes £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced funding for local authorities, announced between 19 March 2 July, to help them respond to pressures faced responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, across all

¹⁷ Local Government Association, [£10 billion Spending Review investment needed to protect and improve local services](#), 1 October 2020.

¹⁸ Local Government Association, [Comprehensive Spending Review 2020: LGA submission](#), 29 September 2020.

¹⁹ Department for Education, [Vulnerable Children and Young People Survey Summary of returns Waves 1 to 10](#), p3.

²⁰ MHCLG, [Local authority COVID-19 financial impact monitoring information](#), 1 October 2020.

service areas.²¹ In addition, in his [statement on 12 October 2020](#) announcing the new Covid alert levels, the Prime Minister stated that the Government would provide an additional £1 billion to local authorities.²²

While welcoming the additional funding, the Children's Commissioner noted that only 8% of the first £3.2 billion was spent on children's services. They added that additional spending is now likely to increase as schools start making referrals again and that "without enough money for this initial peak and then longer recession, children's services will be overwhelmed"²³

The Government has also provided additional funding to charities and voluntary sector organisations, including a £7.6 million Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund.²⁴

In [response to a parliamentary question](#) on 12 October 2020, Baroness Berridge, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Education, acknowledged the "increased pressure" that the coronavirus outbreak has placed "on the full range of organisations which provide support to children and young people, including local authorities' children's services and voluntary sector organisations, as well as schools, colleges and early years settings."

She then set out the support that the Government had provided for organisations supporting vulnerable children:

The government has provided an unprecedented package of support for those that support vulnerable children through both statutory and voluntary services. This support package includes £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19-related pressures, including in children's services. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area. The support also includes the Adoption Support Fund, which has provided £8 million to help families under pressure as a result of the outbreak. It also includes the Innovation Programme, which has funded more than £12 million for 14 projects related to areas including domestic violence and supporting teenagers at risk of exploitation.

Additionally, this support package includes funding of more than £7 million to Barnardo's for the See, Hear, Respond service, which offers targeted help to vulnerable children, young people and their families affected by COVID-19 and the measures put in place to stop its spread. It also includes a £7.6 million joint fund between the department and the Home Office for national children's charities operating in England and Wales that offer services to safeguard vulnerable children and that have financially suffered due to the impact of COVID-19. We have also provided

²¹ DHSC/MHCLG news story, [£2.9 billion funding to strengthen care for the vulnerable](#), 19 March 2020; MHCLG, [Government pledges extra £1.6 billion for councils](#), 18 April 2020; MHCLG, [Comprehensive new funding package for councils to help address coronavirus pressures and cover lost income during the pandemic](#), 2 July 2020; [HCWS333](#), 2 July 2020.

²² [HC Deb 12 October 2020](#), c24.

²³ Children's Commissioner, [Childhood in the time of Covid](#), September 2020, pp11-12.

²⁴ DfE, [Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund](#), 23 June 2020.

funding to other charities working with vulnerable children, including Grandparents Plus, Family Rights Group, FosterTalk, the Care Leavers Association, Become, Drive Forward Foundation and Adoption UK.

This funding is in addition to the joint investment from the department and the Home Office in the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's helpline of £1.6 million and additional £310,000 to enhance Childline. In addition, approximately £10 million has already been committed to the Family Fund, helping families with children that have complex needs and disabilities through grants for equipment that makes their lives easier while implementing social distancing measures, including computers, specialist equipment and educational toys.²⁵

1.4 Troubled families programme and family hubs: recent Government policy

There are a number of Government initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable children and families, one of the most high-profile of which is perhaps the Troubled Families Programme (TFP).

The TFP is a programme in England administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The programme conducts targeted interventions for families experiencing multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse.

The programme works with a number of other Government programmes, including, but not limited to, the [Strengthening Families Protecting Children programme](#), [Reducing Parental Conflict programme](#), the [Early Outcomes fund](#) and the [Trusted Relationships fund](#).

Further information on the TFP is available in the Library Briefing: [The Troubled Families Programme \(England\)](#).

In May 2020, the County Councils Network called upon the Government to make TFP funds available "now to scale up family support services" and to set out a long term financial settlement in the forthcoming Spending Review, as it expected a rising pressure on services due to the Coronavirus outbreak.²⁶

The [Conservative Party Manifesto for the 2019 general election](#) stated that a Conservative government would "improve the Troubled Families programme and champion Family Hubs to serve vulnerable families with the intensive, integrated support they need to care for children – from the early years and throughout their lives."²⁷

In January 2020, the UK Government announced that the TFP would continue for a further year, to March 2021.²⁸

²⁵ [PQHL8520](#), 28 September 2020.

²⁶ CCN, [Councils fear a rise in vulnerable children needing support due to the lockdown](#), 22 May 2020.

²⁷ [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), p.14.

²⁸ MHCLG, [Government Confirms Extra Support for Troubled Families to Succeed](#), January 2020.

At the [March 2020 Budget](#), the Government announced that it would provide “£2.5 million for research and developing best practice around the integration of services for families, including family hubs, and how best to support vulnerable children.”²⁹ In response to a parliamentary question on 8 October 2020, the Minister, Vicky Ford, stated that a procurement process for the funding would be launched shortly:

There are already many family hubs across the country up and running. We want to ensure that innovations such as family hubs are recognised and shared, and successful approaches can spread. Local areas are using their existing funding pots to move to a family hub model.

The Budget 2020 allocated £2.5 million for research and developing best practice around the integration of services for families, including family hubs. We will be launching the procurement process for this work shortly.³⁰

Box 1: Family Hubs

Family Hubs often build on the existing infrastructure of Children’s Centres and extend their offer to include support for parents, couples and children regardless of age. In a 2016 discussion paper on Family Hubs, the Children’s Commissioner explained that they “deliver holistic, early intervention services to a whole community.” It added that they are a “next step to co-ordinate existing services and support thereby creating better information-sharing networks, ensuring that children and families no longer go missing between services and make effective use of funds.”³¹

As noted in section 1.2 above, in September 2020 the Children’s Commissioner argued that Family Hubs “should become core assets in every community” as part of a recovery package to support children following the Covid-19 pandemic.³²

Further information on how Family Hubs operate is available on the website of the Family Hubs Network at: [Introducing Family Hubs](#).

General information on Government policy around early intervention is provided in Library Briefing 7647, [Early Intervention](#).

²⁹ HM Treasury, [Budget 2020](#), HC 121, 12 March 2020.

³⁰ [PQ98935](#), 8 October 2020.

³¹ Children’s Commissioner, [Family Hubs: A Discussion Paper](#), October 2016, p5.

³² Children’s Commissioner, [Childhood in the time of Covid](#), September 2020, p27.

2. UK Parliament Proceedings

2.1 Debates

[A Manifesto to Strengthen Families](#)

02 Nov 2017 | Debates | House of Lords | 785 cc1511-1543

Lords motion to take note of A Manifesto to Strengthen Families, published on 6 September. Agreed to on question.

2.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Children: Coronavirus](#)

14 Oct 2020 | 101281

Asked by: Emma Lewell-Buck

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children have experienced a parental death due to covid-19.

Answering member: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education

The government does not collect information from schools or local authorities on the number of primary and secondary school pupils who have suffered a family bereavement since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. There are no official estimates of the number of children who are affected by family bereavement, neither usually nor since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government remains committed to promoting and supporting the mental health of children and young people. Access to mental health support, including bereavement support, is more important than ever during the COVID-19 outbreak and the department has taken action to ensure schools and colleges are equipped to support children and young people.

We have worked hard to ensure that all pupils and learners were able to return to a full high-quality education programme in September. Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, with £650 million shared across schools over the 2020-21 academic year, is supporting education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place.

Staff need to be equipped to understand that some pupils may have experienced bereavement. Our guidance for the full opening of schools signposts to further support and resources, and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

This includes the MindEd website which has specific material on bereavement and dealing with death and loss, and their website is available here: <https://www.minded.org.uk/>.

This is in addition to the department's remote learning guidance and the National Children's Bureau's (NCB) self-review tool, 'Preparing for recovery: Self-review and signposting tool', which signposts online

support from the Childhood Bereavement Network and Child Bereavement UK. More details on the NCB's self-review tool is available here: <https://www.ncb.org.uk/resources-publications/mental-health-and-wellbeing-primary-schools-preparing-recovery>.

The website for the Childhood Bereavement Network is available here: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>.

The website for Child Bereavement UK is available here: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>.

These materials were supported by webinars over the summer which reached thousands of school and college staff.

We are also investing £8 million in the Wellbeing for Education Return Programme. This will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The programme is funding expert advisers in every area of England to train and support schools and colleges during the autumn and spring terms. The training includes specific examples of supporting bereaved children.

School and college staff are not mental health professionals, and it is important that more specialist support is available for children and their families. All NHS mental health trusts have ensured that there are 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages. We have also provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities, including charities such as Young Minds, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

In addition, Public Health England and Health Education England have developed advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes a specific section on dealing with grief and bereavement. The resources are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

Families

08 Oct 2020 | 98935

Asked by: Fiona Bruce

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 2.7 of Budget 2020 on the provision of £2.5 million for research and developing best practice around the integration of services for families, what that allocation has been spent on.

Answering member: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education

There are already many family hubs across the country up and running. We want to ensure that innovations such as family hubs are recognised and shared, and successful approaches can spread. Local areas are using their existing funding pots to move to a family hub model.

The Budget 2020 allocated £2.5 million for research and developing best practice around the integration of services for families, including family hubs. We will be launching the procurement process for this work shortly.

[Families](#)

18 Sep 2020 | 88370

Asked by: Tulip Siddiq

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he has made on integrating family hubs with the Troubled Families Programme.

Answering member: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education

We will be launching the procurement process for research and developing best practice on integration of services for families, including family hubs, shortly.

The number of family hubs in each locality is determined by local councils in consultation with their local communities.

Local authorities and their partners have the flexibility to deliver the Troubled Families Programme in the way that best meets their local needs. The programme's Early Help System Guide supports local areas to re-configure their services around families and encourages innovative, multi-agency practice, which could include integrated hubs based in the community.

[Children: Day Care](#)

17 Sep 2020 | 89616

Asked by: Andrew Mitchell

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) practical and (b) financial support is available to families that rely on childcare provided by extended family members in areas with additional covid-19 restrictions in place which prevent the mixing of households unless they are in a support bubble.

Answering member: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education

We recognise that extended family members often provide informal childcare. In relevant areas where local restrictions are in place on household mixing, people cannot host others they do not live with, or who are not in their support bubbles, in their homes and gardens. Informal childcare is not exempt from these restrictions.

Nationally, our 'Rule of Six' guidance specifies the exceptions where groups can be larger than six people, which includes registered childcare and supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups.

Parents who need support to obtain suitable childcare to meet their circumstances can contact their local authority for information and guidance about what childcare is available in their area.

The government funds a significant package of free and subsidised childcare. All 3 year olds and 4 year olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare a week, with 30 hours of free childcare available for eligible working parents. The government has acted to protect families that have faced a reduced income as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Parents who were eligible for the 30 hours free childcare entitlement prior to the COVID-19 outbreak remain eligible until October even if they have experienced a change in income.

Disadvantaged 2 year olds are also eligible for 15 hours of free childcare a week and eligible working parents may also be eligible for tax-free childcare. Parents can find out more about the free and subsidised childcare offers at: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a series of policies to support people, jobs and businesses on 20 March 2020, during which he confirmed an increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance for 12 months, in addition to planned uprating of 1.7%. The Universal Credit childcare offer remains the same, and working families can claim back up to 85% of their registered childcare costs each month. This can be claimed up to a month before starting a job. For families with 2 children, this could be worth up to £13,000 a year.

Help with up-front childcare costs for starting work is available through a non-repayable Flexible Support Fund (FSF) award for eligible Universal Credit claimants. The FSF received an additional £150 million this financial year to help support Universal Credit claimants to move closer to, or into, work. Help with up-front costs for eligible Universal Credit claimants is available through Budgeting Advances.

Social Security Benefits: Families

13 Jul 2020 | 71055

Asked by: Dan Jarvis

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to provide additional financial support to bereaved families where the principal earner has died as a result of covid-19.

Answering member: Mims Davies | Department: Department for Work and Pensions

DWP has a range of financial support available for bereaved families.

Bereavement Support Payment provides short-term financial support to working age people whose deceased spouse or civil partner has paid sufficient National Insurance contributions. It is intended to help with the immediate costs of bereavement and can be paid to both widows and widowers. Recipients with children can receive an initial payment of £3,500 and up to 18 monthly payments of £350, whilst those without can receive an initial payment of £2,500 and up to 18 monthly instalments of £100. It is not taxable and is paid on top of any income-related benefits the household receives thus not disadvantaging low income families. It can be paid regardless of whether the surviving spouse or civil partner is in work.

The Funeral Expenses Payments scheme provides an important contribution towards the cost of funeral for claimants in receipt of certain income based benefits or tax credits. The Funeral Expenses Payment pays for the necessary costs of a funeral including the burial or cremation fees in full and in April 2020 the additional element that can help with other costs, such as a coffin or the services of a funeral director, was increased from £700 to £1000.

For those that need support for ongoing living costs, from 6 April 2020 the Government increased the standard allowance in Universal Credit by £86.67 per month (equivalent to £20 per week) for one year on top of the planned annual uprating. This additional increase means that claimants may be up to £1040 better off, depending on their circumstances. This applies to all new and existing Universal Credit claimants.

[Social Security Benefits: Children](#)

06 Jul 2020 | HL5845

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the call by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children to increase the child component of Universal Credit and Child Tax Credits by £20 a week, following their research showing that 7 in 10 families with children in receipt of Universal Credit are cutting back on essentials as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Answering member: Baroness Stedman-Scott | Department: DWP

This Government has introduced an unprecedented package of welfare support of over £6.5 billion to help families cope with the financial impact of COVID-19. This has included increases to

Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit worth up to £1,040 this financial year. In addition, we have increased Local Housing Allowance, lifting rates to the 30th percentile in the Private Rented Sector, putting an average of £600 into people's pockets.

Local Authorities in England will now be able to use the £500 million Hardship Fund announced at the Spring Budget, to help working people on Local Council Tax Support to provide additional help to vulnerable people locally through arrangements such as Local Welfare Schemes. On 10 June, it was announced that we are now providing £63 million in additional funding to local authorities in England to help people who find themselves in severe financial difficulties, through local welfare assistance programmes.

[Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus](#)

23 Jun 2020 | 58837

Asked by: Nadia Whittome

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to provide ongoing additional support through the

social security system to families financially affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Answering member: Will Quince | Department: DWP

The Government has been clear with its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system to ensure people are receiving the support they need. These changes include:

- making it easier to access benefits. Those applying for Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who may have coronavirus, are self-isolating, or caring for a child (or qualifying young person) who falls into either of those categories, or individuals who have been advised to 'shield' because they are at high risk of severe illness, will be entitled from day 1 of their claim – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessments. Both Universal Credit (UC) and ESA can now be claimed online or by phone;
- increasing the standard allowance of UC by up to £1,040 this year;
- temporarily relaxing the application of the Minimum Income Floor for all self-employed claimants affected by COVID-19 to ensure that the self-employed can access UC at a more generous rate;
- making Statutory Sick Pay available from day 1 – as opposed to day 4 - where an eligible individual is sick or self-isolating; and
- increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest 30% of local market rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.

These steps form part of a wider package of measures which represent an investment of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system following the outbreak of COVID-19. These measures, along with the other job and business support programmes announced by the Chancellor, represent one of the most comprehensive packages of support by an advanced economy.

We know that circumstances can change rapidly, and that was particularly true at the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19, which is why the Government will continue to keep the adequacy of its welfare response under review.

[Children in Care](#)

14 May 2019 | 252574

Asked by: Tim Farron

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to reduce the number of children being taken into care; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of measures implemented by his Department to support that aim.

Answering member: Nadhim Zahawi | Department: Department for Education

Information on the number of children who started to be looked after during the year by reason is published in Table C1 in the statistical release 'Children Looked After in England including Adoption' at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>. Information for children taken into care is shown in the attached table.

The government wants every child to be in a stable, loving home that is right for them. One of the key principles of the legislation which underpins the UK's child protection system, is that children are best looked after within their families. However, that is not always possible and, as a last resort, local authorities can apply to the courts for a care or supervision order where the child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm. In making their decisions, the courts must be satisfied that the threshold for significant harm has been met and that taking the child from his or her family's care will be in the child's best interests.

Where a child cannot live at home, we must make sure they are safe and receive the highest quality care, which is why we are working hard to improve the social care support for children across England through our reform programme, Putting Children First. We have also established the Children's Social Care What Works Centre, whose initial research priority focuses on 'what works in safely reducing the need for children to enter care'.

In the Autumn Budget, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an additional £410 million for adult and children's social care in 2019-20. A further £84 million is also being invested over the next 5 years through the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. This programme will support up to 20 local authorities with high or rising demand for children's social care services to improve the support offered to vulnerable children and their families. Through this, we aim to enable more children to stay at home thriving in stable family environments, and safely reduce the number of children entering care.

Across the government, we are also tackling the problems that cause children to be in need in the first place. This includes better supporting those with alcohol-dependent parents, the introduction of landmark legislation for those affected by domestic abuse, preventing young people being drawn into serious violence, and unprecedented investment in early years education and support for children and young people's mental health.

[Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse](#)

26 Mar 2019 | 910044

Asked by: Fiona Bruce

What steps he is taking to support children living with alcohol-dependent parents.

Answering member: Matt Hancock | Department: Department of Health and Social Care

Alcohol addiction has a devastating impact on individuals and their families and it is unacceptable that children bear the brunt of their parents' condition.

This is why we have set up a £6 million three-year programme to improve outcomes for vulnerable children living with alcohol dependent parents.

Families: Disadvantaged

25 Oct 2018 | 180660

Asked by: Andrew Selous

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in which local authority areas the £39 million is being spent in reducing parental conflict through evidence-based interventions; over what time periods that money is being spent; whether there are plans to make service universal; and if she will make a statement.

Answering member: Justin Tomlinson | Department: DWP

There are 31 local authorities (listed below) who will be testing DWP-funded face-to-face interventions to reduce parental conflict. We are spending approximately £12m on these face-to-face interventions, which will be targeted at disadvantaged families – especially workless families, who face triple the risk of experiencing damaging parental conflict. The first referrals will be in April 2019 and interventions will take place for two years.

By 31 March 2019, we will also have made available approximately £9m to build local capability in reducing parental conflict. We are providing all local authorities in England with funding to work with their local partners to increase their strategic capability in embedding proven parental conflict support, and we will also be funding training for frontline practitioners, to help them to identify relationship distress; provide initial support; and to refer appropriately.

On 23 April 2018 the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Work and Pensions announced £6m for a jointly funded package of measures to support children of alcohol dependent parents. This package will run for three years and includes:

- £4.5 million Innovation Fund for local authorities to develop plans that improve outcomes for children whose parents are dependent on alcohol and experiencing conflict
- £1 million to fund national capacity building by non-governmental organisations
- £500,000 to expand national helplines for children with alcohol dependent parents

The areas which have been successful in their Innovation Fund bids are due to be announced shortly.

We will also be working closely with all local authorities in England, including providing expert advice and support through a team of Regional Integration Leads to help local areas to integrate support to

reduce parental conflict into mainstream provision for children and families. This will help to ensure that more mothers and fathers can access support to reduce parental conflict.

Further announcements will be made on other aspects of the programme in due course.

Local Authorities where Face to Face Interventions will be delivered:

Westminster, Brent, Croydon, Lambeth, Kensington & Chelsea, Camden, Hammersmith & Fulham, Gateshead, Stockton, Sunderland, South Tyneside, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, Newcastle, Northumberland, Hartlepool, Durham, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Southend, Essex, Buckinghamshire, Peterborough, Dorset, Somerset, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Devon, Wiltshire, Poole, Torbay.

Marriage Guidance: Finance

05 Jul 2018 | 159575

Asked by: Fiona Bruce

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether new voluntary sector organisations are eligible to access the £39 million of funding provided by her Department for relationship support services in local communities.

Answering member: Kit Malthouse | Department: DWP

The Reducing Parental Conflict Programme is funded by up to £39m, and will encourage councils across England to integrate evidence-based services and approaches to addressing parental conflict that work for their local families.

Just over a quarter of the programme budget will be used to build the evidence base for which interventions work to reduce parental conflict, and provide access to face-to-face support to reduce parental conflict in 30 local authorities across England. The procurement process for the delivery of the face-to-face interventions will be open to any interested party as an open competition.

To help potential suppliers to prepare for these opportunities, we recently published a Prior Information Notice which outlined the timescales for the procurement. This notice advised suppliers that we will be launching an opportunity in July for expert organisations to bid to deliver the face-to-face interventions which DWP will be funding, with these contracts in place by January 2019. Full details of this process will be available when the Invitation to Tender is published.

Organisations interested in bidding for the face-to-face contracts will be able to access the procurement opportunities on Contracts Finder, and can register their interest on Bravo.

In addition to the procurement of face-to-face services, we have also announced £6m of joint funding with the Department of Health and Social Care, aimed at improving the outcomes of children of alcohol-dependent parents, and we expect that there will be opportunities for voluntary sector organisations to participate in this work.

Home Office: Families

18 Jun 2018 | 119116

Asked by: Fiona Bruce

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2017 to Question HL3576, what steps her Department is taking to strengthen families.

Answering member: Caroline Nokes | Department: Home Office

The Home Office has a comprehensive range of policies and measures to strengthen families. These include: Ability to marry and forced marriage prevention policies that directly support healthy couple formation, facilitating civil ceremonies beyond register offices, marriages in accordance with religious beliefs, same sex marriage, data sharing on marriage services, and protection against coercion.

Birth and marriage registration policies that directly support co-parenting, facilitating both parents being able to acknowledge parental responsibility in a range of scenarios, and which allow children to know both their parents.

Birth legislation and policy that supports the inclusion of fathers' details in all birth registrations, as far as practicable. Immigration family policy that helps avoid family breakdown by allowing non-EEA partners, children, parents and adult dependents to join or remain in the UK with a British citizen or person settled in the UK.

Domestic abuse policy that indirectly helps reduce family breakdown, supporting victims and their families who have suffered abuse, and ensuring perpetrators are dealt with effectively. Until 2020, the Government is providing £100 million of dedicated funding for tackling violence against women and girls, and the number of domestic abuse victims across the country has been steadily falling.

3. Press Articles

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

3.1 Press releases

[A comprehensive recovery package is needed to tackle rising tide of childhood vulnerability caused by the Covid crisis](#)

Children's Commissioner for England

29 September 2020

[Addiction services not equipped to treat the 8 million people drinking at high risk during pandemic, warns Royal College](#)

Royal College of Psychiatrists

14 September 2020

[Record numbers contact the NSPCC with concerns during lockdown](#)

NSPCC

10 July 2020

[Charities warn of devastating impact of coronavirus after years of "crisis-drive firefighting" by councils](#)

Barnardo's

18 May 2020

3.2 News articles

[Government urged to reinstate £1.7bn of early intervention funding](#)

Children & Young People Now

15 October 2020

[Covid: What is the mental health cost to the young?](#)

BBC

10 October 2020

[Disabled children's families 'struggling' for support, says charity](#)

BBC

5 October 2020

[Overstretched health visitors caring for up to 2,400 families each](#)

Guardian

04 October 2020

[One in five people drank four nights a week during lockdown, study reveals](#)

The Telegraph

1 October 2020

[Children 'must be the priority' in Covid-19 planning](#)

BBC

28 September 2020

[Parents report more anxiety in lockdown, Scottish poll finds](#)

The Guardian

18 September 2020

[Sharp rise in child and adolescent to parent violence during lockdown, finds study](#)

August 19, 2020

CommunityCare

['We are working with families and building on strengths'](#)

CommunityCare

20 July 2020

[Most social workers say Covid-19 has negatively hit their work and the lives of those they support](#)

CommunityCare

28 May 2020

[Boris Johnson should set up a new Ministry for Families, forty Tory MPs demand in letter to the PM](#)

The Telegraph

8 February 2020

[Troubled Families programme gets £165m cash boost](#)

5 January 2020

BBC

[Troubled Families report 'suppressed'](#)

BBC

8 August 2016

4. Reports

Office for National Statistics reports

[Personal and economic wellbeing in Great Britain: September 2020](#), 10 September 2020

[Coronavirus and home schooling in Great Britain: April to June 2020](#), 22 July 2020

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on young people in Great Britain: 3 April to 10 May 2020](#), 22 June 2020

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#), 7 May 2020

[Families and households in the UK:2019](#), 15 November 2019

[Children whose families struggle to get on are more likely to have mental health disorders](#), 26 March 2019

UK Government reports

Department for Education, [State of the nation 2020: Children and young people's wellbeing](#), 10 October 2020

Department for Work and Pensions, [Reducing parental conflict: A digital discovery](#), June 2019

Department for Work and Pensions, [What works to enhance inter-parental conflict and improve outcomes for children](#), 22 March 2016

Devolved Government reports

Scottish Government, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Children, young people and families- evidence and intelligence report](#), 22 July 2020

Children's Commissioner for England

[Childhood in the time of Covid](#), September 2020

[Best Beginnings in the early years](#), 17 July 2020

[Teenagers falling through the gaps](#), 7 July 2020

[We're all in this together?](#), 25 April 2020

[Tackling the disadvantage gap during the Covid-19 crisis](#), 22 April 2020

[Children, domestic abuse and coronavirus](#), 2 April 2020

[Family Hubs: A discussion paper](#), 25 October 2016

Children's Commissioner for Wales

[Coronavirus and Us](#), September 2020

[No wrong door: bringing services together to meet children's needs](#), June 2020

Other reports

Danny Kruger MP, [Levelling up our communities: Proposals for a new social covenant](#), September 2020 and [Prime Minister's response](#), September 2020

Royal College of Psychiatrists, [Next steps for funding mental healthcare in England](#), September 2020

Early Intervention Foundation, [Reducing parental conflict in the context of Covid-19: adapting to virtual and digital provision of support](#), 28 August 2020

Centre for Social Justice, [Family structure still matters](#), 15 August 2020

Child Poverty Action Group, [Poverty in the pandemic: The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children](#), August 2020

Institute for Government and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, [How fit were public services for coronavirus?](#), August 2020

NSPCC, [How safe are our children? 2020](#), August 2020

Children in Wales, [Covid-19 and the impact on low income and disadvantaged families](#), August 2020

NIHR and King's College London, [Managing through COVID-19: The experiences of children's social care in 15 English local authorities](#), July 2020

Association of Directors of Children's Services, [Building a country that works for all children post-Covid-19](#), July 2020

Adfam, [Families in Lockdown: The effects of Covid-19 on the family and friends of someone with an alcohol, drug or gambling problem](#), 29 June 2020

Institute for Fiscal Studies, [The effects of coronavirus on household finances and financial distress](#), 29 June 2020

Institute for Public Policy Research, [Estimating poverty impacts of the coronavirus pandemic](#), 18 June 2020

Institute for Fundraising, [Impact on the charity sector during coronavirus: Research report June 2020](#), 18 June 2020

Early Intervention Foundation, [Covid-19 and early intervention: Understanding the impact, preparing for recovery](#), 16 June 2020

NSPCC, [Isolated and struggling: Social isolation and the risk of child maltreatment, in lockdown and beyond](#), June 2020

Action for Children, National Children's Bureau, NSPCC, [The Children's Society and Barnardo's, Children and Young People's services: Funding and spending 2010/11 to 2018/19](#), May 2020

Mental Health Foundation, [The COVID-19 pandemic, financial inequality and mental health](#), May 2020

Early Intervention Foundation, [Covid-19 and early intervention: Evidence, challenges and risks relating to virtual and digital recovery](#), 23 April 2020

NSPCC, [What children are saying to Childline about Coronavirus](#), 17 April 2020

National Youth Agency, [Vulnerable Young People: Covid-19 response](#), April 2020

Barnado's Northern Ireland, [Coronavirus- the impact on children & young people](#), April 2020

Early Intervention Foundation, [Why reducing the impact of parental conflict matters for schools](#), 17 February 2020

Early Intervention Foundation, [Engaging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents: Evidence review](#), 4 April 2019

Centre for Social Justice, [Why Family Matters- Comprehensive analysis of the consequences of family breakdown](#), April 2019

National Audit Office, [Pressures on children's social care](#), January 2019

The Manifesto to Strengthen Families, [Making work pay for low-income families inquiry report](#), January 2019

Early Intervention Foundation, [Interparental conflict and outcomes for children in the contexts of poverty and economic pressure](#), 28 April 2017

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres, [Family Hubs: The Future of Children's Centres](#), July 2016

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).