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Policy paper

# Children's social care: reform statement

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**Applies to England**

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All children should be able to live happy, rewarding, and fulfilling lives. We want to transform children's social care, so that families get the help they need when they need it, children are safe and supported by their family network and children in care and care leavers have stable and loving homes.

Children's social care can change lives for the better, but every part of the system needs to work together to achieve this change. We must innovate, learn and reform services to improve the outcomes of children, young people and families.

Transforming how we operate depends on the support and commitment of:

- local government leadership
- leaders across children's social care
- safeguarding partners, relevant agencies (including education settings)
- all practitioners

## Plans for reform

In early 2023 we set out our plans for reform through [Stable homes, built on love](#). Our strategy, backed by £200 million investment, responded to 3 reviews that provided a vision of how to do things differently, including the [Independent review of children's social care](#), and the [National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson](#),

When we published our strategy, we were clear that we did not want local authorities and multi-agency partners to wait for permission to act: we set out a vision for reform and encouraged everyone to start moving towards it. We now move a step closer to realising this vision together.

This statement outlines the publications and announcements we have made today

and is targeted to the sector. We have published:

- the first ever [national kinship strategy – Championing Kinship Care](#) to set out support for family networks providing loving and stable homes to children
- a new [children’s social care national framework](#) to set out the purpose, principles and outcomes that should be achieved in children’s social care
- updates to the [Working together to safeguard children](#) guidance which sets out how to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- a [data strategy](#) to set out long-term plans to transform data in children’s social care
- £8.5 million more investment for fostering to ensure the right homes for children

## National kinship strategy

We want children who cannot live with their parents to be supported to live with people who are known to them and love them. Children in these types of arrangements - in kinship care - often achieve better outcomes than those in other types of non-parental care.

Kinship carers need our support and backing to offer this care and love so they can in turn help us achieve our aim of keeping more families together. [Championing Kinship Care](#) outlines the practical and financial support we will provide kinship families, and is backed by £20 million investment. It sets out how we will provide further support for kinship carers including, but not limited to:

- a financial allowance pathfinder in up to 8 local authorities to provide more financial stability for children growing up in kinship care
- expanding the role of the virtual school heads to champion the outcomes of children in kinship care in schools

We want all local authorities to review their existing support offers for kinship carers and engage in the actions set out in our strategy. Prioritising kinship care requires us all to champion, support and empower kinship families.

## National framework for children’s social

# care

Together, we must deliver excellent standards of practice to:

- improve outcomes for children
- raise aspirations
- ensure partnership working across all agencies, including police, health and education

The [children's social care national framework](#) will bring together the purpose, principles, enablers, and outcomes that children's social care should achieve so children, young people and families can thrive. We want all local authorities to consider how their local offer of support makes a difference in the lives of children, young people and their families, through the design, delivery and commissioning of services. High quality practice should be available to all, no matter where families live in the country.

To help local authorities embed the [national framework](#) and the statutory guidance [Working together to safeguard children](#), we have published [Improving practice for children, young people and families](#). This guide:

- sets out the key changes we are making across the 2 pieces of statutory guidance
- outlines the practical and financial support available to local authorities to help them adapt to the new guidance

We think that every child, young person and their family deserves to understand how improvements to social work practice should change their experiences for the better. We encourage all local authorities and partners to use it.

## Working together to safeguard children

Our plans for reform have always recognised the importance of children's welfare. Children should be kept safe, and this means we must take swift and decisive action to protect them when they are not.

Our statutory guidance, [Working together to safeguard children](#), has been updated and replaces the 2018 version. Starting today we want:

- local authorities and safeguarding partners, to embed new child protection

standards for practitioners

- all partners to deploy a multi-disciplinary workforce to provide direct support that meets the needs of children and families

Successful outcomes for children relies on help, support and protection.

## Transforming data

The data we collect about children and families and the information recorded about their lives and interactions with children's social care, is sensitive and personal and should be treated with care.

Data is held in many places, which makes bringing it together challenging. Poor information sharing is often cited in reviews following the death or injury of a child.

Our [data strategy](#) sets out how we will transform data and digital services in children's social care. Between 2023 and 2025 we will improve information sharing through:

- new research and evaluation
- making improvements to existing data services
- using our data and digital solutions fund to continue testing innovative and sensitive practice in this area

We will publish a [children's social care dashboard](#) in spring 2024. This will bring data together in one place to understand progress towards the outcomes set out in the [national framework](#)

We want:

- all local authorities to engage with the steps we take to transform data and digital services
- all local partners to explore ways to create confident leadership and culture change around the use of data

## Further investment in fostering reforms

We have ambitious plans for reforming the foster care system, and so we will increase our budget to deliver fostering reforms by up to £8.5 million. This takes the total investment for our fostering reforms to £36 million. This is the largest ever investment in fostering in England and will support us to roll out recruitment and retention programmes to over 60% of all local authorities in England.

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