

Question 1

What key factors should be considered when developing national standards to ensure they deliver improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families? This includes how this applies across education, health and care in a 0-25 system.

- To be effective, any new national standards need to be enforceable and will require robust measures (properly resourced) to monitor and evaluate outcomes. This is vital to ensure the standards will raise the quality and availability of SEND provision.
- Care experienced children, including those who are adopted or living in other forms of permanence arrangement, are more likely to have SEND than their peers. Government data shows 55.7% of Children looked after for 12 months or more have SEND, compared to 16.6% of the general population. Charity Adoption UK report 80% of children represented by respondents to their annual Barometer survey have recognised SEND. Compounding this, this cohort is likely to have the identification of SEND and any accompanying support delayed – as suggested by The Education Policy Institute in a report highlighting that those children moving school, frequently out of school or who have experienced neglect or abuse are more likely to experience delay. Therefore:
 - National standards and any guidance must be expanded to include a fuller range of SEND, including developmental trauma and attachment difficulties, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – all of which are highly prevalent among care experienced children, including many of those who have interacted with the APPGAP.
 - For SEND standards to be effective, the Government should ensure there is proactive integration between SEND standards and existing support structures for looked after and previously looked after children, including the role of the designated teacher and the virtual school head, and Pupil Premium Plus.
- The APPGAP hears regularly from children and families and recognises the high prevalence of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs amongst care-experienced children. As such, accompanying guidance to the national standards should set out that children with care experience be excluded from punitive measures around school attendance.

Q2

How should we develop the proposal for new local SEND partnerships to oversee the effective development of local inclusion plans whilst avoiding unnecessary burdens of duplicating current partnerships.

- Any new local SEND partnerships must include people with expertise in the needs of those who are care experienced, including adoption and those living in other permanence arrangements.
- The Department should consider best practice exemplified by some existing multi-agency partnerships involving regional adoption agencies (RAAs), health and education services to ensure better outcomes for previously looked after children; and ensure that such multi-agency partnerships are integrated with SEND partnerships rather than operating in isolation.

Question 5

How can parents and local authorities most effectively work together to produce a tailored list of placements that is appropriate for their child, and gives parents confidence in the EHCP process?

- For lists to be truly tailored to the needs of individual children and to be helpful, staff within local authorities need to be properly trained and resourced to understand the differing needs of care experienced children.
- In Autumn 2021, the APPGAP conducted an inquiry called 'Strengthening Families' which highlighted the inconsistency in trauma awareness and trauma-and-attachment-informed practice within school settings. This must be addressed for suitable SEND support to be implemented at the local level.

Question 8

What steps should be taken to strengthen early years practice with regard to conducting the two-year-old progress check and integration with the Healthy Child Programme review?

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) two-year old progress check and the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) development review are highlighted as important interventions in assessing a child's progress and in optimising a child's development, 'which includes a focus on communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, as well as on children's physical development milestones'. Early years practitioners undertaking the checks must therefore be properly trained in the needs of care experienced children, including an understanding of the impact of trauma, broken attachment and FASD, for these assessments to be meaningful.
- The proposals promise that Family Hubs will offer help to families with SEND 'to navigate support by signposting and referring them to appropriate services within the hub network and incorporate evidence-based support for children with SEND into their provision where appropriate'. Again, those working for/with Family Hubs must be adequately trained and resourced in the needs of care experienced children and young people, including those who are adopted and in other forms of permanence. This must include an understanding of the intersectionality of SEND and care experience.

Question 20

What will make the biggest difference to successful implementation of these proposals? What do you see as the barriers and enablers of success?

- Even with the development of national standards and establishment of SEND partnerships, the potential conflict of interest inherent in local authorities both assessing for - and funding SEND support through EHCPs - is not fully addressed in these proposals. Assessments of support need must be focused on the needs of the child and not what is available or affordable. The Department should consider proposals that would reduce the risk of partiality, for example, developing an independent multi-disciplinary team in each local authority with responsibility for evaluating requests for assessments, carrying out those assessments and drafting EHCPs based on the evidence gathered.
- The national standards are welcome however they must be enforceable and properly monitored and evaluated to have impact. This will have implications for the way Ofsted inspects SEND both in local authorities and individual settings. The Department should consider recommendations from the sector, including Adoption UK, that SEND is given a standalone grade in setting inspections and no setting should be awarded 'outstanding' overall unless SEND provision is also rated 'good' or 'outstanding'.

- Specific recognition of the needs of children and young people with care experience and the high prevalence of SEND among this cohort is needed to ensure they are not excluded from accessing support.
- Few schools specialise in supporting children with a history of trauma and attachment issues, this needs urgently addressing, particularly given the policy focus on attendance and behaviour in the current School's Bill and the potential impact this could have on care experienced children.

Question 22

Is there anything else you would like to say about the proposals in the green paper.

- The Department should give due consideration to the possibility of introducing a statutory provision of an equivalent to the Personal Education Plan for previously looked after children, currently only offered to looked after children. This could enable a mechanism for bringing together a multi-disciplinary team to monitor the progress of children who are adopted and living in other permanence arrangements.
- Any future impact assessments of measures taken must consider how these policies will impact care-experienced children and young people.