

Westminster Education Forum Keynote Seminar: Next steps for children in care: reforming adoption, improving children's homes and supporting care leavers

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 13th May 2014

Venue: Hall of India and Pakistan, Royal Over-Seas League, Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street, London SW1A 1LR



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Agenda subject to change

- 8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Rt Hon the Baroness Butler-Sloss, Chairman, House of Lords Select Committee on Adoption Legislation
- 9.05 - 9.30 **Supporting children in care across the system**
Emily Munro, Deputy Director, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 - 10.15 **Fostering and adoption reform: tackling delay and supporting adoptive parents**
To what extent will the measures in the Children and Families Act achieve Government's aim of speeding up the adoption process; what further steps are local authorities taking to reduce unnecessary delays? What further steps can be taken to encourage local authorities to work more closely with voluntary adoption agencies? In 'fostering for adoption' cases where a child is taken into temporary care before a final court decision has been made on permanent separation, how can concerns around the rights of birth families be addressed? How effective have initiatives to recruit more prospective adopters been so far; what more could be done to encourage more people to adopt, particularly in cases where the child is older or has complex needs? What has been the initial impact of the Adoption Support Fund pilots; is there a need for greater support for adoptive parents, and what more could be provided?
Hugh Thornbery, Chief Executive, Adoption UK and Chair, Adoption Support Fund Expert Advisory Group, Department for Education
Gareth Crossman, Executive Director, Policy, Communications and Fundraising, TACT
Samantha Little, Partner and Head, Children's Law Team, Russell-Cooke Solicitors
Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member, Specialist Children's Services, Kent County Council
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.15 - 10.20 **Chairman's closing remarks**
Rt Hon the Baroness Butler-Sloss, Chairman, House of Lords Select Committee on Adoption Legislation
- 10.20 - 10.45 Coffee
- 10.45 - 10.50 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Ann Coffey MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults
- 10.50 - 11.25 **Championing the rights of looked-after children: priorities for the Office of the Children's Commissioner**
Dr Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.25 - 12.10 **Quality and safety in residential care homes**
How far will Government's 'fundamental overhaul' of children's residential care and Ofsted's proposed new inspection framework improve standards in the sector? What further steps can be taken to reduce the number of children placed outside of their home local authority; in cases where this is unavoidable, how can local authorities improve information-sharing regarding the child's needs and circumstances, and the quality of local residential care provision? What can be done to ensure more places in residential homes are available in areas with higher numbers of children in need of residential care; how will stricter rules on establishing homes affect this? How can local authorities improve the commissioning and monitoring of children's residential care, and what further information on cost and quality could be provided to support them in this? What are the challenges around allowing inadequate homes to close, and how can these be overcome? Will the minimum qualifications proposed for staff in children's homes ensure a high-quality workforce; what will be the effect of these minimum standards on staff costs and recruitment?
Tom Rahilly, Head of Strategy, Looked After Children, NSPCC
Hilary Thompson, Chief Executive, OPM
Jonathan Stanley, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Children's Homes Association
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.10 - 12.55 **Raising aspiration and attainment, and easing transitions from care**
To what extent will the cross-government support strategy for care leavers ensure young people leaving care are aware of the opportunities and support available to them to continue into further education, employment, and adulthood more widely? What will be the impact of the 'pupil premium plus' in raising the attainment of looked-after children; how can Virtual School Heads and schools best work together to provide each looked-after child with the support they need? What can be done to address disparities between local authorities in the value of bursaries for care-leavers in further or higher education? Should local authorities be required by law to provide a 'setting up home allowance'; what further support for independent living could be provided, and what choice should young people leaving care be given in deciding how this allowance is spent? Will extending fostering placements up to the age of 21 improve outcomes for young people in foster care; what would be the challenges of extending this option to young people in residential homes?
David Graham, National Director, Care Leavers' Association
Di Stone, Head of Partnership Programmes Pre-16, University of the West of England
Adrian Money, Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care, East Sussex County Council
Camelia Borg, care experienced young representative, Coram Voice
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chairman's and Westminster Education Forum closing remarks**
Ann Coffey MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults
Jonny Roberts, Associate Editor, Westminster Education Forum