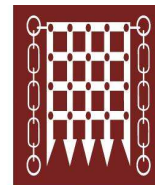


Westminster Education Forum Keynote Seminar: Next steps for children in care - regionalising adoption, improving outcomes and new standards for children's homes

Timing: Morning, Wednesday, 24th February 2016

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

Agenda subject to change



WESTMINSTER
EDUCATION
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8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee

9.00 - 9.05 **Chair's opening remarks**

Earl of Listowel, Treasurer, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children

9.05 - 9.55 **The future for adoption, fostering and special guardianship - improving the adoption process, reducing delay and providing better support for families**

Given the recent decline in adoption rates, what more can be done to encourage prospective families to adopt - will government's planned introduction of regional adoption agencies, as outlined in the Education and Adoption Bill and which will merge local council and voluntary adoption services, be likely to improve local authorities' access to a growing pool of approved adopters and increase the rate at which children are matched with adoptive families? What functions will regional adoption agencies be expected to perform and how will they operate in practice - what implementation challenges might lie ahead and what lessons can be learnt from existing case studies? What has been the impact of the Adoption Support Fund, rolled out nationally in May 2015, which provides therapeutic support for adoptive families and their children; is sufficient similar support on offer to families taking on children through Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), who are currently ineligible for this kind of funding? Given that more than a fifth of children in foster care in the UK have moved home two or more times a year, what more can be done to improve permanency and stability for fostered children?

Kevin Williams, Chief Executive, The Fostering Network

Sheila Durr, Chair, London Adoption Board

Professor Gordon Harold, Director, The Andrew and Virginia Rudd Centre for Adoption Research and Practice, University of Sussex

Sally Melbourne, Chief Executive Officer, Children's Services, Core Assets

Questions and comments from the floor

9.55 - 10.05 **The link between children in care and youth crime: what can be done to keep looked after children out of trouble?**

Given that looked after children are more likely than other children in England and Wales to enter the youth justice system, what measures are being taken to prevent those in care from engaging in unlawful or criminal activity?

Juliet Lyon, Director, Prison Reform Trust

10.05 - 11.00 **Priorities for children's care homes - implementing Quality Standards, addressing safety concerns and developing staff**

What further improvements can be made to the ways in which residential care homes are commissioned, delivered, regulated and inspected, in light of the ongoing Narey Review? With concerns that children's homes are often located in areas deemed to be 'unsafe', what steps are being taken to improve the security and safety of homes and the quality of information-sharing between local agencies and police services? Following its introduction in April 2015, how successfully has Ofsted's new inspection framework for children's homes been implemented; has it succeeded in its aim of ensuring that homes do more to support children's progress and wellbeing? Is there a need for greater mental health provision in children's homes, as advocated by some campaign groups, and to better integrate Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - how might this be achieved? What has been the impact so far of government's Quality Standards for children's homes, introduced last spring; have they succeeded in raising standards of leadership and management in homes and what further measures might be considered? What more can be done to improve skills, qualifications and training for residential care workers, as well as increase opportunities for professional development and career progression?

Jonathan Stanley, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Children's Homes Association (ICHA)

Daniel Clay, Director, TNS BMRB

Dr Miriam Silver, Consultant Clinical Psychologist

Questions and comments from the floor with **Juliet Lyon**, Director, Prison Reform Trust

11.00 - 11.05 **Chair's closing remarks**

Earl of Listowel, Treasurer, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children

11.05 - 11.35 Coffee

11.35 - 11.40 **Chair's opening remarks**

Richard Morris, Head of Service, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)

11.40 - 12.05 **Improving the quality and delivery of services for care leavers**

Ashley McDougall, Director, Local Government, Health and Education, National Audit Office

Questions and comments from the floor

12.05 - 12.55 **How can life outcomes be improved for care leavers? Supporting independence, employment prospects and the journey into adulthood**

In light of concerns that a significant proportion of local authorities fail to stay in touch with care leavers beyond the age of 18, what steps can be taken to ensure that ongoing support remains available to care leavers and to improve the amount of contact councils maintain with individuals? Given that those leaving the care system are more likely to encounter social problems, such as homelessness, teenage pregnancy and poor mental health, is sufficient support - financial or otherwise - on offer to care leavers and what more can be done? What has been the record to date of government's Staying Put policy, which enables young people to stay with former foster carers up to the age of 21; has it succeeded in its aim of preparing care leavers for independence and what further measures might be considered? How can local agencies, colleges and universities work better together to improve care leavers' access to tertiary education? What more can be done to support care leavers to find meaningful employment; would reserving a fixed number of apprenticeships for those leaving care, as has been suggested by some, provide one possible solution?

Michelle Tarling, Widening Participation Outreach Manager, University of Brighton

Keith Clements, Policy Officer, National Children's Bureau

Hugh Sherriffe, Director, Midlands & South West, Barnardo's

Mohammed Muftawu, Experienced Care Leaver and Director, Touching Lives

Questions and comments from the floor

12.55 - 13.00 **Chair's and Westminster Education Forum closing remarks**

Richard Morris, Head of Service, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)

Neil Andrews, Senior Researcher, Westminster Education Forum