

# Summary of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

(including key elements of the DfE CSC  
reform programme)

January 2025



**Somerset**  
Council

# Part 1 – Children’s Social Care

## Child Protection and Safeguarding

### **The Bill -**

- a) Child care and education providers must be consulted in child protection processes
- b) Establish at least one multi-agency child protection team (MACPT) in the LA area, which must include an education professional, a registered health professional with experience of providing health care for children, a social worker, a police officer and any other staff the LA deem appropriate, having consulted with safeguarding partners.
- c) Establish a memorandum setting out how each agency will work with safeguarding partners to facilitate the operation of a MACPT.



# Child Protection and Safeguarding continued..

## DfE CSC Reform programme -

[Keeping children safe, helping families thrive](#) – November 2024

1. A Family Help approach – blending early help and social care practice into locality based teams to offer strengths based support to families, in their community, as early as possible, including family group decision making meetings.
2. Integrating child protection social work and multi-agency partners into these teams (eg domestic abuse, parental drug and alcohol and mental health workers, employment advisors), so that teams understand families better and can provide consistency and expertise when concerns escalate.

# Family Help and child protection reforms must be delivered as a single integrated system that supports the wellbeing of and protects all children from significant harm, inside and outside of the home

This will mean Family Help Lead Practitioners working alongside multi-agency child protection teams, as they continue to maintain relationships with the family.

Our vision for an integrated system

Universal early support

Targeted early help

Child in Need

Child Protection

Children in care

# The key components of Family Help

**Merging targeted early help and section 17 into a single offer of support** – bringing together family support workers (or equivalent) and social work teams co-working to provide seamless support for children and families

Part of an end-to-end system of support, from universal services through to care. This could include building support out of Family Hubs, where they exist.

**Establishing multi-disciplinary family help teams, based in the heart of communities**

Teams should be determined by a local needs assessment – in pathfinders, we are seeing the following agencies/professionals within the team: SEND link workers, domestic abuse specialists, mental health practitioners, youth workers, alcohol and substance misuse specialists, and employment advisers etc.



**Implementing single Family Help assessments and plans** - remove duplication between targeted early help and CIN assessments, to ensure that families only have to tell their story once, even as needs change

The **Family Help Lead practitioner** will have the **skills, knowledge and experience** to work with the family to produce a 'Family Help plan'. They will build a flexible and responsive '**team around the family**', (TAF) brought in from the multi-disciplinary team and beyond. Oversight and supervision arrangements in line with Working Together 23 reviewed to account for the broader range of professionals who can be lead practitioners and have updated local protocols to reflect the changes.

**Establishing the Family Help Lead Practitioner Role** - can be held by a broad range of practitioners able to build a strong and trusted relationship with the family and remain their main point of contact for as long as they need support.

Bring together a range of professionals and services (e.g. SEND specialists) into an **integrated front door model** – where children and families can be triaged to the right level of service based on their needs

**Reforming practice at the front door** - with an emphasis on **having a supportive conversation**, to promote engagement and the reduce stigma associated with asking for help

Practitioners will develop a single plan in collaboration with the family, which clearly sets out goals, milestones and the services that will be provided for the family. The plan should be accessed and jointly managed by all agencies working with the family

# We have set out key features of the reformed child protection system

## Key features of a reformed system:

### Multi –agency child protection teams

#### Establishing dedicated multi-agency child protection teams

- Dedicated, appropriately experienced and consistent core members from the local authority, police, health, education
- Inclusion of other relevant agencies reflecting local needs and harms profile
- Provides a clear focus to addressing child protection concerns and taking decisive action where there is actual or likely significant harm; and
- Responsibility for core, statutory child protection decision making, working alongside Family Help
- Chairing child protection conferences, reviewing CPPs
- Led by a suitably qualified/senior social work practitioner based in the local authority
- Providing child protection advice and consultancy across the system



#### Establishing a new Lead Child Protection Practitioner role

- Embedded into multi-agency child protection teams
- Substantial frontline child protection experience
- With significant input from wider team members and working alongside the family help lead practitioner, ensures the local authority statutory child protection duty is met



### Parental representation and family network engagement as part of child protection processes

- Information, advice and support is provided to all parents at the point the s47 enquiry is initiated
- This allows parents and carers to understand the child protection, process, their rights and what is expected of them.
- It allows them to easily navigate the child protection system and empowers them to have their voices heard throughout.
- The best interest of the child must always be paramount

# Child Protection and Safeguarding continued

## Where Somerset is now –

- a) Family group conferencing is well established in Somerset and runs 250 meetings a year.
- b) Childcare and education providers are consulted routinely in child protection processes
- c) Multi-agency co-location at the “Front Door”; LA multi-professional early help locality teams wrapped around schools, developing as result of restructure - safeguarding partners in health and police already engaged.
- d) Family intervention service and Connect Somerset provide a good early help offer, which can be built upon to create the DfE model.
- e) Family Safeguarding model embedded in CSC – parental drug, alcohol, domestic abuse and mental health staff are part of social care teams
- f) Memorandum/ways of working document will be integral to locality developments

# Information sharing

## Duty to share and a common identifier

### **The Bill –**

- a) – clarifies the agencies, including education providers, who have a duty to share safeguarding information
- b) Recommends a national identifier for children, so information clearly relates to a specific child – (this may be the child's NHS number but is not yet confirmed)

### **Where Somerset is now –**

- a) Education providers understand their duty to share information and implement this effectively
- b) All children open to CSC or family intervention services, already have their NHS number as part of their record. Education records do not routinely record an NHS number



# Schools

## Breakfast clubs

### **The Bill**

All state-funded schools to ensure that all children on roll in Reception class to Year 6 are provided with access to a free breakfast club before the start of each school day which lasts for at least thirty minutes and includes food.

### **Impact on Somerset schools**

Breakfast clubs are not a universal offer in Somerset primary schools. This will offer greater opportunity for all children - there is likely to be additional government funding for this activity, to be announced in early 2025 for 750 early adopter schools.

# Schools

## Branded items of school uniform

### **The Bill** –

Limit of 3 branded items in primary schools and 4 for secondary and middle schools, where one item is a tie.

Planned for legislation mid 2026, so it comes into practice for the 26/27 academic year.

### **Impact on Somerset schools**

Will reduce financial burden on parents of purchasing branded uniform items – unclear if any impact on school finances.

# Schools

## Children not in school - [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) (DfE policy summary document)

### The Bill –

- Compulsory Children Not in School registers in each LA area in England.
- A duty on LAs to provide support to the parents of children on their registers.
- Changes to the School Attendance Order (SAO) process to make it more efficient.
- A requirement whereby parents of some children for whom there are existing safeguarding concerns or attend special schools will need LA consent to home educate (and where children subject to some child protection processes are already being home educated, the LA will be able to require them to attend school).
- A requirement for LAs to consider the home and other learning environments when determining whether or not children should be required to attend school.

Set up funding and continuing to resource it is anticipated to come from the Children's Services prevention grant (grant is new in 25/26 and is merged with the Children and Families grant in 26/27) - no timescale for implementation yet

# Schools

## Independent schools

### The Bill

- a) broadens the full- time education environments that must register as independent schools (clear indication that this is largely about regulating faith-based settings)
- b) May require a suitability assessment for the Head of these environments in order for them to function within regulations
- c) Gives the Secretary of State powers to temporarily suspend the registration of an independent setting (during suspension students will not be able to attend the school and the LA may have to source alternative education)
- d) Allows information sharing between Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate

# Schools

## Academies

### The Bill

Requires Academies to:

- a) employ qualified teachers and to support them through the same mechanisms as maintained schools
- b) follow the National Curriculum (to be introduced following a review of the National Curriculum)
- c) converts the Secretary of State's duty to issue an academy order to a school maintained by a local authority identified by Ofsted as being in a statutory category causing concern, into a discretionary power. For those schools that require more intensive support but not academisation, RISE teams will work as partners to address weaknesses and empower sustained improvement.

# Schools

## Academies continued

- d) Creates a national teachers' pay and conditions framework that includes Academies (amended to a common baseline for pay with no ceiling in January 2025)
- e) Place planning and admissions - new duties will send a strong message to the school system about the importance of co-operation on admissions and place planning so that the local community's needs, especially those of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, are met. The government expects schools and local authorities to help (and not hinder) each other on these issues and to behave in an inclusive way regarding school admissions and place planning
- f) extends LAs' current powers to direct a maintained school to admit a child, to also enable them to direct academies in the same way
- g) Ends the current legal presumption that new schools should be academies and allow proposals for other types of school to be put forward where a new school is needed, including proposals from local authorities themselves.

# Progress from Bill to legislation

As of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025

