

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

Equality impact assessment

June 2026

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The Public Sector Equality Duty

This document records the analysis undertaken by the Department for Education (hereafter 'the department' or 'DfE') to enable Ministers to fulfil the requirements placed on them by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The PSED requires the Minister to have due regard to the need to:

- Limb 1: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Limb 2: advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Limb 3: foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These aims are known as the three limbs of the PSED. This document sets out a summary of the impact of each measure on these limbs. The protected characteristics in question are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

This government's Opportunity Mission will break the link between young peoples' background and their future success in life. The Mission plots a lifelong journey of opportunity that takes us through early childhood development, into excellence in education settings, and then from apprenticeships, colleges and universities into the world of work.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (thereafter 'the Act') will help to break this link at the very beginning of a child's lifelong journey. It will ensure our children's social care and education systems transform life chances for millions of children and young people by putting children and their wellbeing at the centre. It will deliver on manifesto commitments which will break down barriers to opportunity and drive high and rising standards for every child, no matter their background.

Summary of Act

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act will have positive impacts across the protected characteristics of the PSED, covering the three limbs of eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. In the small number of cases where our analysis shows a potentially negative impact, we believe our mitigations are sufficient to counteract any impacts.

The Act will put children and their wellbeing at the centre of the education and children's social care systems. The Act will ensure every child, no matter their background, has a fulfilling childhood enabling them to achieve and thrive. The Act is a key step towards delivering the Opportunity Mission to break the link between young people's background and their future success, and will deliver on core manifesto commitments.

This Act includes a range of measures designed to keep families together and children safe, through mandating 'family group decision making', strengthening the role of education in safeguarding, improving information sharing across and within agencies, requiring safeguarding partners to establish multi-agency child protection teams, and updating the legislation that ensures children are employed safely. Family group decision making is assessed to have a positive impact by improving the consideration of the individual needs of children in care. Strengthening the role of education in safeguarding will have a positive impact across characteristics, through creating better join-up in safeguarding arrangements. Multi-agency child protection teams will better meet the needs of the individual child including across protected characteristics. Any disproportionate impacts on groups with specific protected characteristics from the information sharing and consistent identifier measure will likely be positive and serve to balance a currently disproportionate negative impact on these groups due to the impact of poor information-sharing practices.

This Act will support children with care experience to thrive, by requiring local authorities to publish their local offer for children in kinship care, which will positively impact protected characteristics overrepresented in the care system. The Act also sets out provisions to extend the Virtual School Head role; to strengthen our offer of support for care leavers through requiring local authorities to provide 'Staying Close' support to eligible care leavers where their welfare requires it; and requiring local authorities to publish information about the arrangements it has in place to support and assist care leavers in their transition to adulthood and independent living. The Act will introduce a corporate parenting duty, and a policy on care leavers not being regarded as becoming intentionally homeless. These provisions are assessed to have a positive impact by improving the consideration of the individual needs of children in care. This Act recognises the importance of maintaining sibling relationships for children in care. We are requiring local authorities to allow reasonable contact between children in care and their whole, half and step-siblings, where this is consistent with their welfare. The Act also recognises that record numbers of children are living in temporary accommodation, which evidence shows is harmful to education and health, and introduces a duty on local authorities to notify relevant education and health bodies where a child is placed in temporary accommodation.

This Act will make the children's social care system child-centred by providing a legislative statutory mechanism to authorise the deprivation of liberty, where required to keep them safe, in provision which has the primary purpose of care and treatment and where restrictions on liberty can be imposed, expanding Ofsted's power to issue monetary penalties, overseeing the use of agency workers and closing a legal gap on ill treatment and wilful neglect in regulated establishments. The deprivation of liberty measure will have a positive impact across multiple protected characteristics by providing greater safeguards of rights, and ensuring placements are better suited to the individual. The measure on ill treatment and wilful neglect for children will positively impact those protected characteristics which are over-represented in the care system. We have set out a range of mitigations to counter the potential negative impact of a measure to cap the number of costly agency workers that local authorities can use. The new provider oversight regime seeks to hold provider groups to account for poor quality provision across multiple settings, and where they are not acting in the interests of children. In turn, this is expected to drive higher standards and provide better care for children in care.

This Act will also improve the children's social care placement market and tackle profiteering in the children's social care placements market. It will create changes at a local authority ('LA' used interchangeably throughout) level by harnessing collective buying power through regional co-operation arrangements (Regional Care Cooperatives), which will better meet the needs of children in care. The new financial oversight scheme will positively impact across characteristics by giving local authorities more time to arrange care, support and accommodation that best meets the needs of the child where there is provider financial failure and cessation of service. If profit cap implementation is deemed necessary in the future, it may have positive impacts on advancing equality of opportunity as providers may reinvest profit to increase the quality of their provision. They may also reduce the placement costs they charge local authorities potentially freeing up local authority budgets to invest in services to reduce the number of children needing to come into care in the first place.

The Act will introduce a range of measures aiming to remove barriers to opportunity. An amendment to the Act in the Lords expands FSM eligibility to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit in England, attending state funded schools, which will lift 100,000 children across England out of poverty. Measures on expanding free breakfast club provision and introducing a limit on the number of branded uniform items will break down barriers to opportunity for thousands of children and parents, with a notable positive impact across the majority of protected characteristics. The free breakfast clubs measure will reduce the burden childcare places on household finances and will enable more parents to work. It will reduce the number of primary school pupils starting the school day hungry, thus enabling more children to start the school day ready to achieve and thrive. It will ensure all children have access to the benefits that breakfast clubs offer through a soft and supportive start to the school day, with benefits demonstrated in attendance, behaviour, attainment, and wellbeing. The limit on branded uniform items will reduce financial pressure on parents and will allow for more flexibility in materials and design which will benefit those making choices on health or religious grounds.

The Act will create a safer, higher quality education system for children by introducing Children Not in School (CNIS) registers and requiring parents to obtain local authority consent before certain vulnerable children can be removed from school to be home educated, by introducing regulations on independent educational institutions, and improving teacher misconduct regulation. The CNIS registers and home education safeguarding measures will enable local authorities to take action where children are identified as not receiving a suitable home education and/or where there are wider safeguarding concerns. The measures relating to the regulation of independent education institutions should lead to more children attending registered settings which meet the relevant regulatory standards. We believe this benefit outweighs any risk of disruption to pupils where settings fail to meet these standards. The existing teacher misconduct process includes the requirement for employers to comply with the law on equality, guarding against those with protected characteristics being disproportionately subject to prohibition as a result of the teacher misconduct measure.

Finally, the Act takes action to make sure that parents, wherever they live, will have a good local school for their child, and can be confident they will achieve and thrive, by introducing measures that deliver manifesto commitments on school admissions, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), and the national curriculum. Alongside these, further measures will contribute to driving high and rising standards in schools. An amendment to the Act in the Lords will see the introduction of inspection of academy trusts and, where a trust is identified as underperforming against standards we are working closely with the sector on, intervention. While these measures have positive impacts across the protected characteristics, where there are negative impacts, we have set out clear mitigations. For the QTS measure, we have set out a broad range of mitigations to counter the potential negative impact on groups including unqualified female returners. On the teacher pay measure, the Secretary of State will have a new power to set minimum pay levels in secondary legislation. Academy schools and alternative provision academies will be required to have regard to the rest of the STPCD. We have set out a range of positive impacts for teachers as a result of this measure and will continue to consider our PSED duty as we make these changes.

Part One: Children's Social Care measures

Keeping families together and children safe

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

Policy context

This measure will ensure parents or person(s) with parental responsibility for a child, whose case has reached the pre-proceedings stage, are offered Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and, where the offer is accepted, local authorities must take action to facilitate it. The duty does not apply where it would not be in the child's best interests to offer or hold the meeting. The duty also requires local authorities to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child as part of the FGDM process and give due consideration to them. This ensures that the voice of the child is central to the FGDM process is. For that reason, we identify this as a positive impact on children and young people involved in pre-proceedings. Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is a specific practice model of FGDM.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact for the protected characteristics of **age** (limb 2), **disability** (limb 2), **pregnancy and maternity** (limb 1), **race** (limb 2) and **sex** (limb 2). There are also negative impacts for the protected characteristics of **race** (limb 3) and **sex** (limb 2). FGDM gives the opportunity for the family network to come together and create a family-led plan for the child. FGDM includes key processes to ensure equitable discussion and contribution to the support plan. For example, the facilitator will speak to family network members individually before the meeting then seek agreement from the family network to the support plan. They may also facilitate mediation between family network members to promote better relations and communication ahead of the meeting.

Age: Mandating an offer of FGDM will provide more support for children to stay with their birth parents (or wider family network if they cannot stay with their birth parents), resulting in children being diverted from care. This will have a positive impact on children of all ages. We have also identified an overall positive impact on members of the family network supporting the child. Most children (59%) in kinship care live with a grandparent, and therefore increased support from the family network will help with the burden of care.

In addition, the FGDM duty also requires local authorities to ascertain a child's wishes and feelings during the FGDM process, so far as it is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare. This allows practitioners to facilitate children's engagement with the FGDM process and gives an opportunity for their voices to be heard. We assess the measure will have a positive impact on freedom of expression for children of all ages. For example, LAs may encourage very young or non-verbal children to express their wishes and feelings through art and other media in any age-appropriate way, which can then be presented at the FGDM meeting.

Disability: FGDM could support children with a disability when FGDM leads to kinship care. Of all children living in kinship care, 11.9% were disabled under the Equality Act 2010, compared with 6.6% of children living with at least one parent. FGDM could lead to more support for kinship carers from the wider family network. Research shows that 70% of kinship carers have a long-standing disability. The duty will support the engagement of family networks who could lift the burden of care and ensure support is provided for a kinship carer with a disability.

We assess the FGDM duty to have a positive impact on children with a disability, as FGDM is a child-centric approach which promotes a child's wellbeing. Mandating the offer of a FGDM meeting at the pre-proceedings stage will allow more families to put in place a family-led plan alongside support from skilled professionals. This will include recognition of the child's individual needs, including any disabilities, and recognising how the wider family network could best support the child to develop and thrive alongside the team around the child.

Pregnancy and Maternity: FGDM provides an opportunity for pregnant people to receive support from the wider family network to provide the best care for the child and stay close to the child.

Race: Children from ethnic minority groups are over-represented in the number of children looked after. Participating in FGDM may have a positive impact for Black children and families with negative perceptions and lived experiences of structural racism in the care system, allowing them to avoid interacting with formal institutions such as the courts and empowering them to find their own solutions. There is a risk that a lack of consistency in FGDM implementation may mean that the experience of FGDM is not equally positive for all minoritised ethnic groups. The Families First Partnership Programme Guide sets out clear delivery expectations of local authorities to mitigate this risk and we have also published best practice support on FGDM to support local authorities to embed FGDM in practice across the system.

There may be a **negative** impact under the protected characteristic of **race** where families feel obliged to interact with a system they do not trust and of which they may have previous negative experience. Therefore, we understand that not everyone from minority backgrounds engaging with FGDM will experience the potential positive impacts described above. We will mitigate this potential negative impact by encouraging consistency across national practice. For example, FGDM best practice support and resources made available to all local authorities in advance of the FGDM duty coming into force contains clear practice examples for practitioners to embed anti-racist principles and cultural humility in their FGDM practice.

Sex: FGDM will disproportionately benefit young boys as males account for 57% of children looked after so they are slightly over-represented.

Strengthening the role of education and childcare in safeguarding (inclusion of childcare and education agencies in local safeguarding arrangements)

Policy context

This measure aims to enhance the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs) to better protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It needs to ensure consistent and effective join-up between education and children's social care, police, and health services. We aim to build on existing legislation and recognise that the current system needs to change to ensure education is adequately represented both operationally and strategically. The aim of our legislative change is two-fold, to ensure that:

- Safeguarding partners automatically include all education providers and childcare settings in their multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- These arrangements enable education providers and childcare settings to have representation at both the operational and strategic decision-making levels.

Equalities impact analysis

This policy has a positive impact for the protected characteristics of **age**, **disability** (both limbs 1-2), **gender reassignment**, **race**, **religion or belief**, **sex** and **sexual orientation** (all limbs 1-3).

Age: This policy does not directly discriminate on the basis of age and all age groups of children in the education and childcare settings listed in the Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018¹ would be included. We understand that some settings are less well involved in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs) so the proposed measure will help to bring harder to reach education providers and childcare settings into safeguarding arrangements.

Disability: There is evidence to show that strengthening the role of education in MASAs will have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of disability under limbs 1 and 2 by improving multi-agency working. Recent reviews including the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings has highlighted the need to improve multi-agency working which includes the strategic integration of children's social care with the SEND, health, police and education system.²³

Race: There is evidence to show the proposal could have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of race under limbs 1 and 3. There is research to show that Black and Mixed-heritage boys are less likely than their peers to have been referred to early help services when they were younger.⁴ This proposal aims to bring education closer to

¹ [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency \(England\) Regulations \(2018\)](#).

² [Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings \(2022\)](#). GOV.UK

³ [Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings: government response \(2023\)](#). GOV.UK

⁴ [The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system \(2021\)](#). GOV.UK

multi-agency safeguarding arrangements so that children receive the right support at the right time.

Religion or Belief: This policy does not discriminate on the basis of religion or belief, and there is evidence to suggest that the proposal may have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of religion or belief under all three limbs. Increasing the role of education settings in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements would naturally increase the profile, awareness and effectiveness of existing safeguarding issues and policies in schools. It would have a positive impact on religious and belief based safeguarding issues through enabling closer alignment of deterrence strategies such as Prevent with safeguarding partnerships.

Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Reassignment: The proposal may have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment under limbs 1, 2 and 3. There is evidence to suggest that there is a safeguarding gap when it comes to the issue of sex, sexual orientation and gender.⁵ According to joint targeted area inspection reports, there is evidence to suggest that multi-agency working involving schools has an impact on hate crime based on sex.⁶

⁵ [Asleep at the Wheel \(2023\) Policy Exchange](#)

⁶ [Social care commentary: multi-agency safeguarding arrangements](#) (2018)

Multi-agency child protection teams (for English local authority areas)

Policy context

This measure requires safeguarding partners (local authorities, police forces and integrated care boards) to establish multi-agency child protection teams (MACPT) to support the local authority in the discharge of its child protection duties; and require relevant agencies to enter memorandums to set out how they will facilitate the operation of the MACPT.

The MACPT will bring a clear, fresh focus where there are child protection concerns, bringing experts together across agencies to identify actual or likely significant harm and take decisive action to protect children. These teams will work closely with family help teams to ensure support is brought around the child and family in one integrated system. They will offer advice and expertise to local services in relation to the need to protect children from significant harm and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of local multi-agency child protection activity.

Equalities impact analysis

This policy has a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **age, disability, race, sex** (all limbs 1-3), **gender reassignment**, and **religion or belief** (limbs 2-3).

Age: Data consistently shows the highest risk groups are babies in the home and teenagers outside the home. The proportion of children aged 10 and over on child protection plans has increased from 29% in 2015 to 39% in 2025. Children in need overall have seen a similar 11 percentage point increase over the same period. This is linked to a rise of extra-familial threats faced by adolescents (gangs, trafficking, CCE, CSE and going missing) identified in assessments.⁷

Furthermore, children under the age of 1 account for 4% of the Child in Need (CIN) population and make up more than 30% of Serious Incident Notifications (SINs)⁸. Legislating for MACPTs provides a holistic, joined up approach across agencies, so that support is formed around the child to ensure child protection activity addresses all harm types, for all children. It will ensure access to a range of specialist expertise in relation to child protection concerns and therefore ensure that all babies, children and young people are appropriately protected, regardless of their age.

Disability: Statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children⁹, sets clear expectations on the specific support that should be provided to disabled children and their carers. Improved multi-agency working through MACPTs will strengthen join up and collaboration between services, which will ensure disabled children and their families receive more tailored support if there are concerns a child is at facing likely or actual significant harm. MACPTs will include nominated health practitioners with experience of

⁷ [Children in need: 2024 to 2025](#)

⁸ [Children in need: 2024 to 2025](#); [Serious incident notifications: 2024 to 2025](#)

⁹ [Working together to safeguard children 2026: a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children](#)

working with children. We expect that these practitioners will help the MACPT navigate the health system and bring expertise to child protection activity for disabled children.

Pregnancy and maternity: Mothers with severe postpartum psychiatric diagnoses are more likely to have children's social care involvement with their infants. Research conducted by the Foundations (What Works Centre for Children and Families) showed findings that suggest that mothers with children's social care involvement in the context of an acute post-partum psychiatric diagnosis may have high levels of support needs, but that services may struggle to meet their needs fully.¹⁰ Members of MACPTs will be expected to build positive, trusting and co-operative relationships with parents, approaching them with empathy and adapt their response to meet their diverse needs whilst responding to the child protection needs of the baby. Practitioners are expected to ensure they understand families and their complexities and potential barriers these create in seeking and accessing help and support.

Race: We will work closely with stakeholders to develop the operational detail of MACPTs to ensure all agencies work together to ensure a child centred, welfare focused approach to child protection. MACPTs will be expected to respond to all harm types, embedding a child protection system that ensures that all children facing actual or likely significant harm are protected.¹¹ Our published Family First Partnership Programme guide¹² makes clear that in establishing MACPTs, safeguarding partners should consider forms of significant harm which may disproportionately affect specific cohorts of children, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, 'honour' based abuse and group-based child sexual exploitation and that practice should be inclusive, anti-discriminatory and responsive to the needs and experiences of children and families of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. MACPTs should offer a joint approach to the way agencies protect children and young people and ensure the needs of all families are met in the wider system, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. As a result, we expect to see a reduction in the disparities of experiences for children from different ethnic backgrounds in the child protection system as a result.

Sex: There is some evidence that legislating for MACPTs will have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of sex. We have identified potential impacts under limbs 1, 2 and 3. We know that there are slightly more boys than girls in the children's social care system. Just over half of 'children in need' and 'children looked after' are male (55% and 56% respectively in 2025) compared to 51% of the overall child population. We also know that males are over-represented in relation to certain harms (such as child criminal exploitation) and females over-represented in others (such as child sexual exploitation). It is important to note, however, that children of both sexes can experience all types of extra-familial harm. We expect the joint working across agencies to improve understanding and work with children experiencing these harms.

Religion or belief: We have not identified potential impacts under limbs 1, 2 and 3. However, MACPTs will be expected to take proactive steps to understand a child's

¹⁰ [What are the characteristics and needs of mothers who access acute postpartum psychiatric care and have children's social care involvement? \(2023\) What Works for Children's Social Care](#)

¹¹ [Education, children's social care and offending](#) (2022) GOV.UK

¹² Families First Partnership Programme guide

identity, including culture and religion and ensure that the protective and support services provided have this in mind. We therefore expect the policy to have a positive impact although this will require effective monitoring and assessment.

Information-sharing and consistent identifiers for children

Policy context

These measures will introduce a broad duty for certain agencies to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, providing a clear legal basis for sharing information whilst aligning with existing data protection legislation. The Secretary of State has the power to issue information standards when processing information for the purposes of safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children.

Further, the Secretary of State will be given a power to specify a Single Unique Identifier (known as a consistent identifier in legislation) and designate the agencies required to use it for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In addition, the Secretary of State can make regulations authorising or requiring disclosure of the consistent identifier to designated persons so that designated persons can comply with their duty to include the consistent identifier when they are processing information about a child. The Secretary of State will also have the power to issue a code of practice for persons in scope of the consistent identifier duty under s.16LB (including designated persons in s.16LB(10) and service providers (s.16LB(13))).

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has positive impacts for **age, disability, race, religion or belief**, and **sex** under limb 2. The measure has a neutral impact across protected characteristics for limb 1 (eliminating unlawful discrimination) and limb 3 (fostering good relations). The new policy position would apply equally across all children, with no evidence of negative impacts identified. Any disproportionate impacts on those groups with specific protected characteristics will likely be positive and serve to balance a currently disproportionate negative impact on these groups due to the impact of poor information sharing practices.

Age: There is some evidence that the needs of certain age groups, particularly under 1s, are more frequently missed and so the proposed changes may help to close the gap between these groups.

Disability, race, religion or belief and sex: Any disproportionate impacts will likely be positive in the context of limb 2 by serving to reduce a currently disproportionate negative impact on individuals within this group due to the impact of currently poor information sharing practices.

Employment of children

Policy context

Part II of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (“the CYPA 1933”) makes provision for the employment of children in England and Wales. Section 18 of the CYPA 1933 sets out age limits and restrictions on the hours that children can work and the type of work which they can do. Part III of the Children and Young Person’s (Scotland) Act 1937 (“the CYP SA 1937”) makes equivalent provision for the employment of children in Scotland. Both acts also make provision for local authorities to make byelaws in connection with child employment, including in relation to child employment permits.

Local authorities in England and Wales currently have the power to make byelaws under s18(2) of the CYPA 1933. Local authority byelaws may, to a limited extent, relax some restrictions in s18(1), prohibit the employment of a child in any specified occupation and make provision in relation to child employment permits. The equivalent provision in Scotland is in s28(1) and (2) of the CYP SA 1937.

We are looking to amend the CYPA 1933 in England and Wales and the CYP SA 1937 in Scotland to:

- Prohibit the employment for a child otherwise than in accordance with a permit. (This is already included in most, if not all, local authority byelaws).
- Permit a child to work until 8pm. (This is rather than 7pm, but still in line with international obligations).
- Remove the restriction on children only being allowed to work for two hours on a Sunday. (The overall number of hours a child can work in a week will however remain unchanged).
- Permit a child to work for an hour before school. (This is already allowed under most local authority byelaws).
- Replace the power for local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland to make byelaws in relation to child employment with a power for the Secretary of State to make regulations in relation to child employment in England, Welsh Ministers in relation to Wales and Scottish Ministers in relation to Scotland.

Regulations under this power may authorise the employment of 13-year-old children, make provision in relation to child employment permits (including the application process, what must be contained on a permit, revoking permits, or setting conditions and rights of appeal), and record keeping.

Equalities impact analysis

Age: Replacing the power for local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland to make byelaws in relation to child employment with a power for the Secretary of State to make regulations in relation to child employment in England, Welsh Ministers in relation to Wales and Scottish Ministers in relation to Scotland will ensure that we are able to keep a consistent approach within England, Wales and Scotland. The positive impacts will come from the approach to child employment being standardised within England, Wales and

Scotland and across their respective local authority boundaries. It will ensure that children have the same opportunities within their nation to take up paid employment regardless of their local authority and where they live. The measure will therefore have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of age. It will also have a positive impact on fostering good relations between employees of different ages, as the greater the exposure to others' points of views will foster a greater understanding.

By extending provisions to allow children to work more flexibly provides them with more experience of work and decision-making in relation to their own time, needs, and income. Their inability to work more than two hours on a Sunday is not consistent with part-time work which would be available when they turn 16 and would not provide experience reflective of future employments. Therefore, the ability to make decisions about their working hours and for that to be more consistent with future working patterns are potentially positively impacted by these provisions.

Supporting children with care experience to thrive

Kinship Local Offer Requirement (Information: children in kinship care and their carers)

Policy context

This measure will put into legislation the requirement for local authorities to publish a kinship local offer. This offer will detail the support available to kinship carers, and children living in kinship care arrangements. The measure will also require local authorities to consult relevant persons prior to publishing their first kinship local offer or updating their local offer. This measure aims to provide clarity and ensure that kinship families are aware of and can access the support they need.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have positive impacts on the protected characteristics of **age** (limb 2), **disability** (limb 2), **race** (limb 2) and **sex** (limb 2). The duty to consult has the potential to create positive impacts not associated with specific limbs of the PSED for those sharing any of the protected characteristics.

Age: We have identified positive impacts for children and young people as well as for carers who tend to be older than parents (median age of kinship carers who responded to Kinship's 2023 household survey was 55-59, with nearly half (44%) of respondents aged 60 or over) and the 2021 census data found that most children living in kinship care (59.2%) lived with at least one grandparent, so the characteristics of potential kinship carers reflect that it is an older population. The legislation is likely to positively impact on kinship carers across various age groups, particularly older carers (such as grandparents). Providing them with information on financial support, respite care, and legal advice can alleviate the unique pressures they face, such as health concerns or retirement-related financial strains.

The duty to consult and publish a report of the consultation would likely have positive impacts on children and young people living in kinship care. Anecdotally, kinship local offers tend to focus on support for kinship carers, so this duty would provide an opportunity to discover what children really think and improve kinship local offers accordingly.

There would likely be a positive impact for kinship carers of all ages; those of working age would benefit from being consulted on the kind of support they would like to receive as working adults and carers, and the same can be said for older kinship carers who may have retired and have taken on the role of raising a child at an unexpected stage in their life.

Disability: We have identified positive impacts for children affected, who are more likely to have a disability than children in parental households, and a positive impact for carers who are more likely to be deprived in the health/disability dimension than parents. Of all children living in kinship care, 11.9% were disabled under the Equality Act, compared with 6.6% of children living with at least one parent. Carers with disabilities will benefit from clearer information about the support available, including access to physical aids, adapted housing, and respite services tailored to their needs. Children with disabilities in kinship arrangements will benefit from clear and accessible information for their kinship

carer to understand what support is available to them. The key consideration for the implementation of this duty will be to ensure that kinship local offers are accessible to people with disabilities, including accessible venues for in-person services, easy-read formats, and online information compatible with screen readers or other assistive technologies.

The duty to consult and publish a report of the consultation may have positive impacts on children and young people living in kinship care and their carers with disabilities. Hearing directly from those with disabilities would increase the chance that kinship local offers would take their needs into consideration and may therefore improve the support they receive.

Race: The duty to consult and publish a report of the consultation may have both positive and neutral impacts on children and young people living in kinship care and their families from Black ethnic groups. For formal kinship families, there may be a positive impact for those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds as information gathered may be used to provide specific “racialised” support. The [*Raised by Relatives: The experiences of Black and Asian kinship carers research*](#) by charity Kinship suggests that while Black and Asian kinship carers face similar barriers to other kinship families (including a lack of financial support), they also deal with specific challenges, including cultural stigma, systemic racism and limited access to support and tailored services. Moreover, the National Kinship Care Ambassador’s engagement with charities and experts by experience has highlighted a need for support, especially therapeutic support, tailored to those for whom their ethnicity may be a factor in their experiences (for example, where they have experienced systemic racism). If LAs are able to engage with these groups through consultation, they will be in a better position to tailor their kinship local offer accordingly.

The duty to consult may have neutral impacts for those from minoritised ethnic groups because we estimate children from these groups, whilst being under-represented in the formal kinship cohort, are over-represented in the kinship cohort overall, suggesting they are more likely to be in informal kinship arrangements. LAs describe this cohort as being difficult to reach. If LAs are unable to identify or do not increase their efforts to reach this cohort, then consultation may not change the status quo for these groups. To maximise the impact of consultation, LAs should consider how to improve outreach to these communities.

Sex: Children living in kinship care were very slightly more likely to be female than children living with parent(s) (50% vs 49%). Kinship’s 2023 survey showed that 89% of respondents were female. Legislation is likely to have a positive impact by ensuring that women, who are often more likely to be a primary caregiver, know what support is available to them, including financial assistance and respite care.

The duty to consult and publish a report of the consultation should have positive impacts for all consulted in general, but there may be particular positive impacts for female kinship carers, who are more likely to be primary care givers, and for male kinship carers, who may have other needs not currently met by kinship local offers due to being less represented in the kinship carer population.

Virtual School Heads (VSH) (promoting educational achievement)

Policy context

This measure will place a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children who are on child in need plans, child protection plans and all children in kinship arrangements. For children with a social worker this will give Virtual School Heads (VSH) strategic oversight of the cohort, whilst for kinship children this will include both a strategic role whilst also a duty to provide information and advice, upon request, to parents, guardians, teachers, social workers and others. Making these roles statutory will ensure a consistency of the role nationally, ensuring these cohorts of children and young people will receive consistent support no matter where they live or are educated.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **age**, **disability**, **marriage and civil partnership**, **race** and **sex**, under all three limbs of the PSED.

Age: It is anticipated that the extension of the VSH role will create a more equitable environment for children with a social worker and children in kinship care, regardless of their age, by supporting education establishments to better understand the cohorts of these children, enabling more targeted support that considers their unique needs at different stages of their development.

Disability: The measure will help to advance the equality of opportunity between those who have an identified SEN and those who do not, for example through raised awareness of needs, delivery of training, and targeted interventions by education establishments. The extended role for kinship children will also include the provision of information and advice to support their educational attainment.

Marriage or civil partnership: Given the early intervention that the role allows for children with a social worker, and the evidence of impact through the provision of information and advice, it is anticipated that the measure will have a positive impact against the three limbs of the PSED test with regards to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership. The extended role to kinship children mirrors the VSH role for previously looked-after children, which has been statutory since 2018. We have good evidence of the positive impact this has had for adoptive parents, through regular engagement with stakeholders including the National Association of Virtual School Heads, Adoption UK and the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board.

Race: The extended VSH role may have the impact of addressing disparities, promoting cultural sensitivities and awareness, and reducing bias and discrimination on the basis of race.

Sex: Extending the VSH role may have positive impacts on the protected characteristic of sex by addressing gender disparities in educational outcomes among children with a social worker and kinship children, and promoting gender equality by encouraging practices that challenge stereotypes and create a more inclusive and supportive

environment for all students. Given that there are over 9% more male children with a social worker than female, and as boys generally have poorer education outcomes than girls, especially in terms of literacy, it is anticipated that the extended role may facilitate improved support in this space.

Staying Close (provision of advice and other support)

Policy context

This measure will require local authorities to assess whether all former relevant children (young people who have previously been looked after by the local authority and meet the definition of former relevant child in section 23C of the Children Act 1989) (up to age 25) require the provision of Staying Close support and, if it is in the interests of that young person's welfare, to provide that support. Staying Close support is support provided for the purposes of finding and keeping suitable accommodation, and to access services relating to health and wellbeing, relationships, education and training, employment and participating in society. This support will be in the form of giving advice or information, or the making of representations.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a mostly neutral impact but has a positive impact on **age** and **race** (limb 1). These duties will allow bespoke support to be delivered in ways that will allow better understanding of the needs of care leavers. This means support should be tailored to their specific needs – local authorities are subject to their own equalities duties which they must consider when complying with these new staying close duties. A dedicated programme of care will reduce them experiencing stigma or discrimination from a number of areas, for example, discrimination when attempting to rent accommodation. As with the local offer for care leavers, this legislation will help care-experienced young people access services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners and make best use of them.

Age: As of 31 March 2023, 26% of Children Looked After were aged 16+ with care leavers often saying that turning 18 is a 'cliff edge' with support significantly reducing at that point. We expect former relevant children up to the age of 25 to receive, as their assessed needs require it, support through a Staying Close provision so there is better support for transition to adulthood, with improved outcomes in accommodation stability, wellbeing, education, employment or training outcomes, stronger relationships and support networks and independent living skills.

Race: Children from Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups were over-represented in the numbers of Children Looked After. Any additional support for this cohort provided by Staying Close should have a positive impact.

Local offer for care leavers

Policy context

This section will require each local authority to publish information on its internal processes and procedures to ensure a planned and supportive transition between care and independent living for care leavers (as defined in section 2(7) of the Children and Social Work Act 2017). This must include information about the authority's arrangements for anticipating the future needs of care leavers for accommodation, co-operating with the local housing authorities in its area, information on services relating to financial literacy, arrangements around financial support and providing assistance to eligible care leavers who are at risk of homelessness.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact for the protected characteristics of **age** (limb 1) and **race** (limb 1).

The independent review of children's social care identified that many looked after children and care leavers felt they had experienced stigma and discrimination because of having been in care. Ensuring that local authorities have communicated across teams to create and publish information will allow better understanding of the needs of care leavers and may lead to more training for the professionals supporting them. A dedicated approach to their care will reduce experiences of stigma or discrimination from a number of areas, for example, discrimination when attempting to rent accommodation. It will improve their life chances through personalised support and increased accommodation stability.

Age: Care leavers often say turning 18 is a 'cliff edge' with support significantly reducing. A young person who is turning 18 and leaving a residential or foster care placement will have a clear idea of what support and options are open to them.

Race: Children from Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups were over-represented in the numbers of Children Looked After. As 43% of care leavers have the protected characteristics of race, they are likely to benefit when leaving a placement to have better information to support their pathway planning and access to services.

Care leavers not to be regarded as becoming homeless intentionally

Policy context

This measure disapplies the intentional homelessness test for care leavers who are in scope of the local authority's corporate parenting duty and who are not being looked after by a local authority. This means that they cannot be found to have become homeless intentionally.

This change will require an amendment to Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 which is the legislative framework that governs local authorities' homelessness function.

This change in legislation is intended to support successful transition from care to adulthood and is needed in recognition of the fact care leavers have some of the worst long-term life outcomes in society including housing where care leavers are a group that are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact across the protected characteristics of race, pregnancy and maternity, disability, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. It has a neutral impact across the other characteristics.

Race: We do not have published data on race or ethnicity of care leavers owed a homelessness duty, or those who have been found as having become homeless intentionally. However, we know that households with a lead applicant from a minority ethnic group are over-represented amongst those who are homeless and in temporary accommodation; and particularly in London. Ethnic minorities are also over-represented in the population of looked after children.¹³ We can infer that "Black and Mixed ethnic" groups may be over-represented amongst homeless care leavers and this amendment is therefore likely to apply disproportionately to Black and Mixed ethnic groups and will have an indirect positive impact on those groups under limbs 1 and 2.

Those who have the protected characteristic of **pregnancy and maternity**, **sexual orientation** and **gender reassignment** are more likely to be overrepresented in the homeless population.¹⁴¹⁵ For **disability**, of all care leavers aged 18+ owed a homelessness duty in 2023-24, 17% had a learning disability, and 47% had a history of mental health problems. These groups will therefore be indirectly positively impacted by a change in legislation impacting their access to homelessness assistance. Compared with the general homeless population, of all homeless households, 5.94% of all homeless households had a learning disability, whilst 26.38% have a history of mental health problems¹⁶. This suggests that disability is more prevalent amongst care leavers than the general homeless population.

¹³ [Children looked after in England including adoptions](#) (2025) Explore education statistics.

¹⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fd32a8e84ae1fd8592ec8d/Detailed_LA_20232024.xlsx (sheet 12)

¹⁵ [LGBT in Britain – Trans Report](#) (2018) Stonewall

¹⁶ [MHCLG support needs dashboard](#)

Corporate Parenting

Policy context

Children in care and care leavers do not have the family support networks that other young people can rely on and experience worse outcomes than their peers. Local Authorities already play a crucial role in delivering services for children in care and care leavers, but do not have all the levers at their disposal to deal with all the difficult challenges they face, and to ensure that children in care and care leavers can achieve their full potential.

The legislation introduces new corporate parenting responsibilities on secretaries of state and relevant public bodies whose services have most impact on the lives of children in care and care leavers, to help improve the poor outcomes they currently experience across all aspects of their lives.

The new corporate parenting responsibilities are broad duties which aim to drive cultural change over time by ensuring relevant authorities are alert to matters affecting children in care and care leavers. The new responsibilities require relevant authorities to consider what steps they could take to support these children and young people in a way which is consistent with their core functions.

Equalities impact analysis

The legislation aims to help improve the poor outcomes that looked after children and care leavers experience compared to their peers, across all aspects of their lives. These measures would therefore benefit all care experienced young people, but will have a disproportionately positive impact on those with protected characteristics that are over-represented amongst children in care and care leavers: **age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race** and **sex** under all limbs. It is assessed to have a neutral impact across the remaining characteristics.

Age: New corporate parenting legislation intends to improve support and services for looked after children aged up to 18 and care leavers aged 16-24. As the duties may help improve the experiences of looked after children and care leavers, we think it could also have an indirect positive impact on care leavers aged 25 and over in that they would have experienced better and more tailored services before they reached that age.

Disability: Data for England shows that 30.8% of children looked after for 12 months or more had either a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan, which is significantly higher than their peers in the general population (4.2%). The new legislation requires corporate parents to be alert to matters which adversely affect, or might adversely affect, the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. We would anticipate corporate parents to consider how they can design and deliver services that take account of looked after children and care leavers' needs and circumstances, including disability.

Pregnancy and maternity: It is recognised that young people in care may face higher risks of early pregnancy due to factors such as instability, lack of support, and socio-

economic challenges. The legislation may encourage corporate parents, including health services, to consider how they can design and deliver services that take account of looked after children and care leavers' needs and circumstances and support looked after children and care leavers in a tailored and appropriate way.

Race: We know from data that children from mixed ethnic groups (11%) are over-represented in the numbers of looked after children in England compared to amongst all children (8%), whilst the proportion of looked after children from Asian ethnic groups (5%) is lower than that of all children (12%). However, we assess that the new corporate parenting responsibilities could have a positive impact on looked after children and care leavers regardless of race and do not expect any direct discrimination based on race.

Sex: According to the data for England, the proportion of males (57%) were found to be slightly over-represented in the looked after children population compared to that of all children (51%). We assess that the new corporate parenting responsibilities could have a positive impact on looked after children and care leavers regardless of sex. We do not expect any direct discrimination based on sex as a result of this legislation. We know from data that there are more boys and young men in the care and care experienced populations than girls and women, so these measures could have an indirect benefit for boys and young men, because more people of this sex will be affected.

Making the care system child-centred

Sibling contact for children in care of the local authority

Policy context

Currently, the law states that Local Authorities (LAs) must 'endeavour' to promote contact between looked after children and their relatives, wherever "reasonably practicable" (paragraph 15, schedule 2, Children Act 1989), where this is in both children's best interests. Care planning regulations make clear that arrangements to promote and maintain contact with siblings must be included in a child's care plan.

However, according to reports from the Children's Commissioner, stakeholder groups and children themselves, there is large national variation in the regularity of and commitment to ongoing sibling contact, demonstrating that the existing laws and regulations are insufficient.

We are adding siblings to section 34 of the Children Act 1989 to strengthen the duty on LAs to support and prioritise contact between children in the care of the LA and their siblings, where this is in their best interests and consistent with their welfare.

By making these changes we are seeking to ensure that children in the care of the LA are properly supported to have meaningful, enduring relationships with their siblings, where this is consistent with their welfare. We also want to place the same emphasis on ensuring reasonable contact between children in care and their siblings, as already exists with parents. Ensuring that children are supported to maintain enduring, loving relationships in the care system is a key priority for this government, and this change will support this objective.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has positive impacts for **age**, **disability**, **race**, and **sex** under limbs 2 and 3. The measure has a neutral impact across protected characteristics for limb 1 (eliminating unlawful discrimination). We do not anticipate there would be any identifiable negative impacts on any protected characteristic groups as a result of the change. Where we do not have data, we have assessed the equalities impact and consider it to be at least neutral.

Age: Research by the Children's Commissioner for England in 2023 found that an estimated 37% of children with a sibling – that is 20,000 children – are separated from a sibling when placed in the care of the LA. By strengthening the duty on LAs, this will have a positive impact on these children up to the age of 18 and outcomes for this group should be improved as a result of the revised policy. While this amendment will apply equally to all children in the care of the LA, a 2022 Coram Voice report, [Staying Connected](#), found that 22% of 8- to 10-year-olds and 31% of 11- to 18-year-olds felt that they saw their siblings too little. So, this change to legislation could particularly benefit older children who appear to be more likely to be separated from their siblings and also see them less.

Disability: Children who have come into the care of the LA because of a disability (46%) are more likely to be separated from their siblings than other children. By strengthening the duty on LAs to allow reasonable contact for all children in care, this will have a positive impact on disabled children and outcomes for this group should be improved as a result of the revised policy.

Race: Gypsy / Roma and Irish Traveller children are more likely to be separated from their siblings (55% and 46%) than children of other ethnicities. As the legislation will apply equally to all children in care of the LA, we expect this policy to have a positive impact on these young people, and outcomes for this group should be improved as a result of the revised policy.

Sex: Among sibling groups with 2 siblings, 30% of mixed-gender sibling groups were split up compared to 27% for same-gender sibling groups. Among sibling groups with 3 siblings, 50% of mixed gender-sibling groups were split up compared to 47% for same-gender sibling groups¹⁷. The report used the term 'gender' rather than sex, we have included this data as it does relate to sex rather than gender identity. As the legislation will apply equally to all children in care of the LA, we expect this policy to have a positive impact on mixed-gender sibling groups and outcomes for this group should be improved as a result of the revised policy.

¹⁷ [Children's Commissioner – Siblings in care report](#)

Temporary Accommodation

Policy context

This measure will place a new duty on local housing authorities (LHAs) in England to notify specified bodies (educational institutions, GP practices and health visiting services) when a child is placed in Temporary Accommodation (TA). The notification will be available to any child aged 0-17 that is placed in TA for whom the homelessness applicant has parental or caring responsibilities, or who is themselves making the application in the case of 16/17 year olds living independently from their parents. Consent will be required before a notification can be made.

This measure is targeted to have a positive impact on homeless families and, specifically, homeless children living in TA. As shown in official homelessness statistics (July to September 2025 – the latest data available), the largest group of households that are in priority need for homelessness assistance are households with dependent children (64% of households in temporary accommodation have dependent children¹⁸). The intention of this measure is to improve information sharing so that educational institutions and health providers are aware where children may require additional or different support.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have positive impacts on the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, and sex, under limb 2. We have assessed limbs 1 and 3 and have found a neutral impact for this measure across the protected characteristics.

This measure is also expected to have a positive impact of enhancing equality of opportunity amongst those who have one or more of the protected characteristics of age, disability, race, and sex, as well as for those who have the additional intersect of being from a disadvantaged background. In 2024/25, 46% of households with children owed a relief or prevention duty had one or more support needs, which includes access to education, employment or training (6%), history of mental health problems (18%), physical ill health or disability (15%), learning disability (7%). Total 'young person aged 16-17' with support needs for was 0.8% of all households assessed as owed a duty¹⁹.

Age: We hold data on the age of the main applicant in homeless households. The amendment targets children aged 0-17 who are placed in TA so will benefit this age group by alerting educational establishments and health providers so they can then provide support. Between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2024, 78% of child deaths linked to TA were of children under the age of 120, demonstrating the importance of notifying health providers as well as educational establishments.

Disability: The duty is likely to support households where a household member has a disability. Of those households who were assessed as being owed a duty in 2024/25, (not just those living in TA) 21% reported physical ill health or disability, 28% reported

¹⁸ [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁹ [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25 - GOV.UK](#)

²⁰ [Child Mortality in Temporary Accommodation 2025 - Shared Health Foundation](#)

having a history of mental health problems and 6% reported a learning disability²¹. We expect this amendment to have a positive impact on children with disabilities as we anticipate it will enable them to access more personalised and joined-up care.

Race: We hold homelessness data on the ethnicity of the main applicant in homeless households. Households with black main applicants as well as those from mixed or multiple ethnic groups were overrepresented among households owed a homeless duty compared to the England population, whilst white and Asian/Asian British main applicants were underrepresented compared to population estimates. In London, main applicants from a minority ethnic group were over-represented (at 63%²²). We expect this measure will therefore have positive impact on the protected characteristic of race because of the additional or different support which can be provided for the child in TA.

Sex: Women with children are over-represented in the homeless population. As of July-September 2025 (the latest official homelessness statistics available) (with 32% of households in temporary accommodation composed of single women with dependent children, compared to 3% single men with dependent children and 21% couples with dependent children²³). We only hold data on the Sex of the lead applicant but can assume this duty will have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of Sex because of the additional or different support which can be provided for a single mother's children, though the duty will apply for all children with any household composition in TA.

A possible impact considered is stigmatisation and the unintended consequence of these children being treated unfairly (consciously or subconsciously) leading to worse school or college support and academic and non-academic outcomes. We have mitigated this negative impact by a. including consent in the legislation ("the LHA must ask the parent or those with parental responsibility of the child, or the child themselves in instances of 16/17-year-olds living independently from their parents, to agree to the LHA notifying relevant bodies that such accommodation has been secured under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 for that child"), and will seek to further mitigate it by b. exploring through stakeholder engagement how best to update guidance to ensure school and college staff are aware of how best to avoid this unintended consequence.

²¹ [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25 - GOV.UK](#)

²² [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25 - GOV.UK](#)

²³ [Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Use of accommodation for depriving a child of their liberty

Policy context

Currently the only way to deprive a child of their liberty (outside of other specific frameworks such as in relation to mental health) is through a Deprivation of Liberty Order (DOLO) via the High Court's inherent jurisdiction (often in unsuitable, unregistered placements) or alternatively application for a secure accommodation order via section 25 of the Children Act 1989, which authorises the deprivation of liberty of a child in a secure children's home that is designed for the purpose of depriving liberty.

This legislation will amend section 25 of the Children Act 1989 to create a statutory mechanism for Local Authorities in England and Wales to seek authorisation for the deprivation of liberty of children in placements designed for the purpose of treatment and care and that is capable of depriving a child of their liberty if needed to keep them safe and in connection with their care and treatment. In addition, this section ensures that the amendments to section 25 of the Children Act 1989 made in section 11 extend to local authorities in Scotland. This change will ensure that children benefit from the safeguards and protections afforded by a statutory scheme and underpin the growth of the type of provision they need. We believe that without this change we will continue to fail to keep this vulnerable cohort safe or support them to get on well in life.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact across all three limbs of the PSED for the protected characteristics of **age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, and race**.

Age: There will be a positive impact particularly on teenagers 13-18 years old, which is the age group most likely to be placed in a secure children's home or under a DOLO. Children impacted by the policy will benefit from better outcomes and better integration with public life, advancing their equality in relation to others.

Disability: Mental health, emotional dysregulation and neurodevelopmental disorders are highly prevalent in children receiving DOLOs and so our policy will impact the cohort of children with multiple, complex needs. In bringing deprivation of liberty within this new provision into a statutory scheme, these children will have clearer safeguards for their rights, court authorisation of the deprivation of liberty will be time-limited (maximum period of authorisation to be set out in regulations) and require re-authorisation at regular intervals to ensure that it is in the best interest of the child, and parity in access to legal aid to those placed in secure children's homes. The policy also aims to increase the number of placements available for this cohort, with a wider policy aim of creating better long-term pathway planning for children with complex needs. The outcome of this will be that children are placed in homes that better meets their needs, and there will be a better understanding of the needs of children within this cohort, which includes a higher-than-average number of children with mental health or neurodevelopmental disorders.

Gender reassignment, Sex, Race: The policy will deliver treatment and care that will benefit these people compared to the current system. The positive impacts would be a) greater safeguards of their rights, b) placement in homes which better meet their needs

and offer therapeutic input advancing their equality of opportunity and c) with a wider policy aim of creating better long-term pathway planning for children with complex needs. The outcome of this should be a better understanding of the needs of children.

Ofsted powers to issue monetary penalties

Policy context

This measure will expand Ofsted powers to issue monetary penalties for acts or omissions that constitute offences by or under the Care Standards Act 2000 – including non-compliance of the registration requirements (where the only current enforcement power is prosecution). Without registration, Ofsted cannot be assured of children's safety, wellbeing, suitability of staff or safeguarding practices as they have no ability to inspect against regulations which seek to ensure those practices. Ofsted would issue a monetary penalty following an investigation of those services, and Ofsted would need to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the relevant act or omission has occurred. This would be an alternative to prosecution, which could still be pursued instead of the monetary penalty or for further breaches. We feel additional enforcement powers would mean Ofsted could publicly be seen to act against more illegal settings, and at greater pace than current powers allow.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a broadly neutral impact across the limbs and protected characteristics of the PSED. There are positive impacts under the 'eliminating unlawful discrimination' limb for **age**, **disability**, **race** and **sexual orientation**.

This change would provide the assurance these settings or providers adhere to current standards and regulations. Those regulations are designed to provide protections to these children, including dealing with harassment or victimisation.

Age, race and sexual orientation: Through better assurance mechanisms, the scrutiny of practices via inspection of registered providers will add protection against unlawful bullying and harassment.

Disability: As a high proportion of looked after children have disabilities or long-term health issues, this policy will increase assurance they are placed in accountable settings.

Children's social care agency workers

Policy context

This measure will create a regulation making power enabling the Secretary of State to introduce regulations to strengthen the existing regulatory framework on use of agency workers in local authority children's social care services. The intention is that the regulations may apply similar provisions to the current statutory guidance on the use of agency social workers in local authority children's social care services but to a broader cohort of workers within children's social care. Our analysis focuses on the equalities impacts for social workers, as the group to which the regulatory framework (set out in statutory guidance published in September 2024) currently applies. We will carry out further equalities analysis for other groups as regulations are developed and consulted on. Provisions are likely to include:

- Governance arrangements for supply of workers via a project team or packaged model to ensure that local authorities retain oversight and clear accountability over the children's social care practice of workers not in direct employment of the local authority;
- Minimum notice periods to reduce instability caused by abrupt departures;
- Minimum post-qualifying experience e.g. current guidance stipulates all agency social workers should have at least three years post-qualified experience (PQE) working in direct employment of a local authority practising in children's social care in England; and
- Requirement to both seek and provide references for children's social care staff.

We will consult on draft regulations and make amendments to the existing statutory guidance as needed. The changes create a legally binding regulatory framework that will reduce costs to local authorities and promote consistent quality relationships between children and the professionals working with them.

Equalities impact analysis

There are two main cohorts affected by the measure – individuals working in local authorities' children's social care services in England, particularly those currently on agency assignments, and 'service users' – members of the public in receipt of support from local authority children's services in England via a child and family social worker.

This measure has neutral impacts for both cohorts under **gender reassignment**, **religion or belief**, **pregnancy and maternity** and **sexual orientation**.

There is a positive impact for service users concerning 'age'. Local authority children's social care services support vulnerable children and families. The children's social care population includes children in need of support or protection, children in care and care leavers. With the exception of care leavers, the population is entirely under 18.

Introducing regulation on agency use will strengthen the quality of the social work workforce and reduce workforce instability which will lead to better outcomes for children. This will have a positive impact on children of all ages in this cohort.

While we have limited data on the protected characteristics of agency social workers in local authority children's services, we have identified negative impacts for individuals working in local authority children's social care services relating to **age** and **race** under limbs 1 and 2, and relating to **disability** and **sex** under limb 2 only. However, we consider this to be justifiable in the context of the mitigations we have set out.

Age: Regulating minimum experience requirements will have a greater impact on newly qualified workers who are more likely to be younger. Removing or restricting access to agency assignments for newly qualified workers that will remain available to older, more experienced workers, may limit their earning potential and ability to access flexible working conditions compared with more experienced peers.

Race: Statutory guidance currently defines minimum qualifying experience as three years in direct employment of one or more local authorities in England, practising in a child and family context while registered as a social worker with a UK regulator. This may mean that workers from outside of England are prevented from accessing agency assignments in English local authorities even though they may have equal or more experience under a different legal framework. As this cohort is more likely to be from an ethnic minority background, the minimum experience requirement is potentially discriminatory to those who have trained abroad and/or have experience outside work in English local authorities.

Disability: We do not have data on the prevalence of disability within child and family social workers. However, we do have data on the prevalence of disability in the wider social worker workforce. As at 31 March 2025, 9.2% of social workers on the Social Work England register declared a disability. 81.8% answered that they did not have a disability and 4.7% preferred not to say.²⁴ Responses to the consultation on introducing statutory guidance have indicated that primary factors causing social workers with disabilities or health conditions to leave permanent local authority employment and move to agencies are better work-life balance and increased flexibility. Reducing access to agency assignments in local authority children's social care services may therefore disproportionately impact this group.

Sex: The overwhelming majority of child and family social workers are female, therefore there may be an over-representation of females in the agency workforce. In 2025, nearly 9 in 10, or 88%, of child and family social workers were female. This is higher than the 74% seen in the teaching profession and the 46% seen in professional occupations.²⁵).The consultation on introducing statutory guidance highlighted equality concerns for social workers who have a need for increased flexibility in relation to caring responsibilities.²⁶ Therefore, there is a potential impact due to the prevalence of caring responsibilities in the female workforce and the rules potentially restrict equality of opportunity by reducing the usage of agency work as an alternative to local authority employment.

²⁴ Social Work England. (2025). *Demographics and diversity of the social work register*. <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/about/data-and-research/data-and-insight/Demographics-diversity-of-register>

²⁵ *Children's social work workforce (2026)* reporting year 2025

²⁶ *Child and family social worker workforce: government response (2023)*. GOV.UK

We began collecting data on agency use on a quarterly basis at local authority and regional levels in Spring 2025. By gathering regular and detailed information we can monitor the implementation of the current agency rules statutory guidance and the associated impacts. We will continue to use existing communication channels with the sector to identify any emerging equalities issues. We also plan to link the agency data collection to the annual workforce census which will give us further insight into protected characteristics. In addition, many local authorities are offering social workers, including those with protected characteristics, currently supplied by recruitment businesses and working in local authorities the opportunity to transition to direct employment where they wish to do so. We will review the efficacy and impact of the agency rules statutory guidance as part of framing regulations made under this power.

There are mitigations on retention where we have worked with the sector to improve working conditions and create environments that embrace diversity and inclusion, so that all social workers are happy at work and are able to thrive. In September 2025, we published the National Workload Action Group's independent report, alongside our response,²⁷ on workload drivers and recommendations to ease unnecessary workload and inform ongoing reforms so that social workers can spend more time in direct practice with children and families.

In October 2024, we published resources that support local authorities in improving retention through the lens of the employer standards.²⁸ This includes resources on flexible working, wellbeing and diversity and inclusion, as well as producing materials that support local authorities to procure and manage agency workers effectively and collaboratively.

The regulatory framework aims to reduce costs to local authorities and improve stability and quality in the agency workforce, allowing local authorities the opportunity to re-invest costs saved in increasing recruitment and enhancing the offer to permanent employees will benefit the workforce. The improvement in the quality and stability of the agency workforce will have a positive impact on children and families in receipt of support from children's services. Therefore overall, we believe the impact of introducing statutory guidance and strengthening the regulatory framework on agency use is justifiable.

²⁷ [National workload action group: reports on social worker workload \(2025\) GOV.UK](#)

²⁸ [Support for social workers: resources for managers and leaders \(2024\) GOV.UK](#)

Protection for children from ill-treatment or wilful neglect

Policy context

There is currently a gap in the legal framework meaning that it is not possible to prosecute individuals for the ill treatment or wilful neglect of children aged 16 or 17 in regulated children's social care establishments or to prosecute care providers for a gross breach of duty that contributes to such abuse being able to occur.

This Act closes gaps in existing legislation by ensuring care worker offences in the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 extend to children aged 16 and 17 in regulated social care establishments.

The Act also extends offences by care providers to cover all under 18s, ensuring parity of protection between adult and children's social care and that care providers are held to proper account.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact for the protected characteristics of **age, disability, race** and **sex under all three limbs**, with a neutral impact on the remaining characteristics.

Age: Currently over a quarter (27%) of looked after children are aged 16 years and over. Over the last five years, those looked after children aged 16+ years have been gradually increasing²⁹. There is currently a gap in protection for children aged 16 or 17 from ill treatment or wilful neglect by care workers in regulated children's social care establishments. This change will mean that individuals can be prosecuted for the ill treatment or wilful neglect of children aged 16 or 17, as is already the case for those under 16 and over 18. We are also extending the care provider offence so that all under 18s are covered against offences committed by care providers that have grossly breached their duties, which benefits all children.

Disability: A child in care is three times more likely to have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Closing these legislative gaps to protect children from ill treatment or wilful neglect will have a positive impact on this cohort and outcomes for this group should be improved as a result of the revised policy.

Race: Children from Mixed ethnic groups are over-represented and children from Asian ethnic groups are under-represented in the numbers of looked after children in England and Wales.³⁰ Children of White ethnicity account for 71% of looked after children, 11% were Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 7% Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British, 5% other ethnicities, and ethnicity was not known or not yet recorded for 1%. Overall, we expect this policy to have a positive impact on these young people, and outcomes for this group should be improved as a result of the policy.

²⁹ [Children looked after in England including adoptions \(2024\). Explore Education Statistics](#)

³⁰ [Ethnic group by age and sex in England and Wales \(2021\) Office for National Statistics](#)

Sex: This policy change does not directly discriminate on the basis of sex as care worker offences will apply to all children aged 16 or 17 in care and care provider offences to all under 18s in England and Wales and they will therefore benefit equally. However, given that males are slightly over-represented in the CLA population at 57% (compared to 51% in the overall child population)³¹, and most children in the youth custody population in England and Wales are male (98%)³² there may be a disproportionate positive impact on this group.

Provider Oversight Regime

Policy Context

This measure will strengthen Ofsted's regulatory powers to hold provider groups to account when there are quality issues in multiple children's social care settings they own. Provider oversight will allow Ofsted to issue a fine and/or refuse further registrations from the provider group if it does not implement the improvement changes that are required.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex** and **age**, across all three limbs. This is because the measure seeks to hold groups to account if there is poor quality and they are not acting in the interests of children, including where groups are not sufficiently adhering to action plans that could positively impact protected characteristics. This is the reason we can expect the proposed measure to impact the protected characteristics which are over-represented in the care system.

Disability: Generally, children in care are more likely to have disabilities compared to the general population and will therefore disproportionately benefit from the measure. At 31st March 2024, 54,510 CIN (13.6%) had a disability recorded³³. At 31st March 2023, 58.1% of CLA pupils had Special Educational Needs (SEN)³⁴, this is compared to 17% of all pupils.

Gender reassignment: Looked-after children, including those in foster care, are over-represented in gender identity services and will therefore disproportionately benefit from the measure. Many of these children also have other mental health needs or neurodiversity. New guidance emphasises the importance of involving parents in decisions about gender questioning and reassignment, and care providers are encouraged to ensure that any social transition is handled with care and in the best interests of the child.³⁵

Race: White British children are the most represented group in children's homes. Black Caribbean children are significantly over-represented, being 20 times more likely to be in care compared to Asian Indian children, and will therefore disproportionately benefit from

³¹ [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

³² [Youth Justice Statistics: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

³³ [Children in need\(2024\) Explore education statistics](#)

³⁴ [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England](#) (2023). Explore education statistics

³⁵ [Parent first approach at the core of new guidance on gender questioning children](#) (2023). GOV.UK

the measure. Asian children are almost three times less likely to be in care than White children and almost four times less likely than Black children.³⁶

Religion or belief: The majority of children in care identify as Christian. A significant number of children are Muslim. There are also children who identify with other religions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism. An increasing number of children identify as non-religious or secular.³⁷

Sex: Boys are slightly more represented compared to girls, and for **sexual orientation** a significant number of children in care identify as LGBTQ+.

Age: The age range of children continues to be broad, typically from very young children (2 years old) up to 18 years old. The average age of children entering care for the first time is around 14 years.³⁸

Electronic notices under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act

Policy context

This measure will allow any notices and documents that are to be served under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act (i.e. by the Chief Inspector for Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted for shorthand), the Secretary of State for Education, or Welsh Ministers), to be served by email.

The existing requirement to serve notices by post or hand is an inefficient way to serve official notices and documents. This measure will help avoid outdated, costly and time-consuming practice requirements that could delay relevant action being taken to resolve concerns identified in establishments and agencies.

Equalities Impact Analysis

The measure would have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of disability. There is a neutral impact across all other protected characteristics. No evidence of negative impacts has been identified. As the amendment is a widening of permissible contact methods, and not a mandatory change, there remains flexibility for the most appropriate or preferred method in each case to be used.

Disability: The impact on those with a disability will likely be positive, as digital means of communication enable the use of various assistive technologies such as screen readers. We expect the amendment would therefore contribute to a reduction in the negative impacts of postal notifications on those who rely on assistive technologies.

³⁶ ³⁶ [Ethnic 'Racial' Disparity and disproportionality – Children Looked After, is it all in the data?](#) (2021) Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

³⁷ [Ethnic 'Racial' Disparity and disproportionality – Children Looked After, is it all in the data?](#) (2021) Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

³⁸ [Children's social care in England](#) (2024) GOV.UK

Improve the children's social care placement market and tackle profiteering

Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) (regional co-operation arrangements)

Policy context

The government will support local authorities to work together to develop regional co-operation arrangements that are known as Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs). RCCs will analyse the local and regional need for accommodation for looked after children and develop sufficiency strategies to address these needs. The government expects RCCs to work in partnership with health and youth justice services when carrying out strategic planning for looked after children's accommodation. RCCs will commission places for looked after children, developing regional provision and working with local and regional providers to shape the children's care market. Through operating on a larger scale than individual local authorities and having specialist staff, RCCs will be able to develop a wider range of places for children to live. Our aim is that more children should live in a home that better meets their needs, ensuring greater stability (fewer changes of care placements and/or schools) and continuity of care (including health care).

The government has worked with Greater Manchester and the South East regions to set up two pathfinders, with a further rollout scheduled for spring 2026. Its policy intention is to work with local authorities and partners to set up further RCCs on a voluntary basis. However, the problems in the children's social care market are significant and RCCs are one of the steps the government is taking to address them. Therefore, as a last resort, this measure would give the Secretary of State the power to direct local authorities to establish regional co-operation arrangements.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of **age**, **disability**, **religion and belief**, **sex**, and **sexual orientation** (all under limbs 2-3) and **race** (limbs 1-3).

Disability: A key aim for RCCs is to ensure more accommodation is available that better meets children's needs, including where children have particular health needs or disabilities.

Race: The RCC programme will support local authorities to meet their statutory duties to accommodate looked after children and ensure sufficient accommodation for looked after children.³⁹⁴⁰ Due consideration should be taken of the particular needs of the child, for example in relation to racial origin, cultural and linguistic background. This will help

³⁹ Section 22A of the Children Act 1989 states that when a child is in the care of a local authority, it is their duty to provide the child with accommodation.

⁴⁰ Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 places a general duty on local authorities to ensure there is enough accommodation in the local area to meet the needs of children that it looks after.

ensure children and young people aged 0-18 in the care system have a safe and stable home in the form of children's homes or fostering placements, enhancing their equality of opportunity (limb 2). The role of RCCs to support local authorities to meet their duties to looked after children will also have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of **age, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation**.

Financial Oversight Scheme

Policy context

To help ensure that placements are stable, we will introduce a new financial oversight scheme for children's social care. The scheme will increase financial and corporate transparency among the most 'difficult to replace' providers, allow for an accurate, real-time assessment of financial risk, and provide advance warning to local authorities if there is a real possibility that establishments or agencies may cease to be carried on because of any risks to their financial sustainability, so they can take swift action and minimise disruption to children.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact across all protected characteristics across limb 2 and 3, apart from **pregnancy and maternity** where it will have a neutral impact.

Age: The scheme will promote an orderly process of exits that keeps disruptions to care and stability of children and young people's placements to a minimum. If a large or 'difficult to replace' children's social care provider unexpectedly failed financially, it could lead to them closing their provision suddenly, causing huge disruption to Looked After Children (LAC) who could lose their home and local authorities having to find new placements at very short notice which might not be the best fit for their needs. The financial oversight scheme seeks to guard against this risk and protect the placement stability of LAC. This will promote a more stable lifestyle for children and young people aged 0-18 in the care system and therefore advance their equality of opportunity (limb 2). An increased likelihood of placement stability will have a positive impact on promoting positive, stable, and long-term relations between LAC (age 10-18) and adults responsible for their care (limb 3).

Disability: This policy will support local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties to provide sufficient placements for LAC, including placements that meet the needs of LAC with disabilities. Furthermore, the scheme will include dual registered residential special schools where providers or their owners meet the entry criteria.

Gender reassignment: In the event that financial failure of providers or their parent companies is a real possibility, the scheme will support local authorities to meet their existing statutory duties to ensure there is sufficient provision in their area to meet the needs of children in their care, as well as find placements to meet the child's needs. This should consider the identity of a child, including those who have reassigned gender. We expect the scheme to promote stable placements for LAC with reassigned gender which will support equality of opportunity and the maintaining of trusting and stable relationships

between LAC who have reassigned gender and those who care for them (social workers, foster carers, care providers).

Race: We expect that the scheme will support local authorities by giving them more warning of financial failure, which will enable them to find suitable placements whereby children can remain close to their cultural communities. As such, there will be a positive impact on limb 2 and 3 for LAC who are of a minority ethnic background. We also expect the scheme to guard against the negative impacts of placement instability for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Religion or belief: The scheme will support local authorities to meet their duties to looked after children, which includes making placements that consider the identity of a child. LAC from particular religions may have specific needs such as specific dietary requirements, or proximity to place of worship.

Sex: The scheme will guard against the negative impacts associated with financial failure of 'difficult to replace' providers on both males and females in the care system – but as there are slightly more LAC who are male, this demographic will benefit disproportionately. This will have a positive impact on both promoting equality of opportunity (limb 2) and fostering positive relations (limb 3).

Sexual orientation: The scheme will support local authorities to meet their duties to LAC, which includes making placements that considers the identity of a child. This will help to ensure children have their needs met regardless of sexual orientation and are placed in provision that respects identity and sexual orientation of the child in care. Therefore, there is a positive impact on limbs 2 and 3 of the PSED.

Future children's social care profit cap

Policy context

In some instances, there is a lack of transparency in the prices charged to local authorities for children's social care placements, and it is often unclear the extent to which these prices accurately reflect the quality of provision. High and increasing costs and regulatory gaps in the market cannot be allowed to continue. We want to ensure a placements market that works at a local, regional and national level, delivering high quality care that is affordable for local authorities so that they can meet the needs of the children in their care. We also want the market to function effectively to ensure providers are not making excessive profits off the back of our most vulnerable children. We are therefore taking the power to cap the profits of children's social care providers in future, if our wider package of interventions in the looked after children's placement market do not work.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact on limb 2 (advancing equality of opportunity). The profit cap, if implemented in the future, would limit profit-making in the children's social care placements market. As a result, providers may choose to invest to increase the quality of their provision, for example by providing higher wages and better training to staff, or by improving the services and facilities they provide. They may also lower the placement costs they charge to local authorities and reduce their profits that way. The money saved by local authorities could potentially be invested in other services, potentially decreasing the likelihood that children will need to come into care in the first place. This therefore may have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of **age** (limbs 1-3), disability (limbs 2-3), **race** (limbs 2-3), **gender reassignment** (limbs 2-3), **religion and belief** (limbs 2-3) **sex** (limbs 2-3), and **sexual orientation** (limbs 2-3) through its impact on looked after children.

Part Two: Schools measures

Removing barriers to opportunity in schools

Free Breakfast Clubs and School Food Standards

Policy context

This measure means every state-funded school in England with primary aged provision will be under a duty to, as a minimum, secure a club that is at least 30 minutes in duration, includes food, and is free and open to all pupils in Reception to Year 6 on roll at the school. The minimum breakfast club requirements will be set out in law, providing certainty for parents on the offer. Rising food insecurity and the high cost of before-school childcare are putting significant pressure on households in England. In the 2022/23 period, 17% of children lived in food-insecure households, a sharp increase from 12% in 2021/22⁴¹. Moreover, 38% of state school teachers have reported a noticeable increase in the number of pupils arriving at school hungry⁴², a trend closely linked to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. This issue is compounded by the challenges parents face in accessing affordable, reliable, and flexible childcare. Data indicates that 43% of non-working mothers would prefer to work if they had access to suitable childcare⁴³, while over half of parents struggle to find formal childcare that fits their needs.⁴⁴

In addition, this measure seeks to extend the statutory duty to comply with the school food standards, to ensure the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 apply in their entirety, to all Academies (primary and secondary) and mirror the regulatory framework for maintained schools. It is a long-standing policy position that all academies should follow the regulations in full and this amendment seeks to formalise this position.

We are also extending the duty to provide free school meals (FSM) to City Technology Colleges, to mirror the regulatory framework for academy and maintained schools and reflect the current practice in schools. This closes a regulatory loophole for three schools, all of which already record FSM registered pupils on roll.

Equalities impact analysis

Breakfast club measures have a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **sex, disability, race, and religion or belief** under limb 2.

Sex: We know that many women who do not work full time have cited childcare as a barrier, therefore we expect mothers will be the primary beneficiaries of this policy. By including a 30-minute period of childcare in the minimum requirements for the new provision, this will enable women to return to work / work more hours by minimising the burden of childcare, in turn supporting to close the gender gap in the labour market. The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity as ensuring there is an

⁴¹ House of Commons Library (2024) [Who is experiencing food insecurity in the UK?](#)

⁴² Sutton Trust (2022) [Cost of Living and Education](#)

⁴³ [Childcare and EARLY Years Survey of Parents 2022](#)

⁴⁴ [IPSOS Parent Poll – 2022, Wave 11, table](#)

adequate supply of childcare places is a key part of ensuring mothers have a choice for what they are able to do following maternity leave, and may reduce the traditional caregiving burden on women, allowing them to participate more fully in the workforce.

Given the majority of lone parents are mothers, we expect there to be a positive impact on this group, however there will also be a positive impact on lone fathers/carers facing the same childcare challenges.

As with parents, this measure will have a positive impact on members of the workforce as they will benefit from an increased childcare offer, enabling them to increase their hours where appropriate. As wraparound in schools is predominantly staffed by support staff (including teaching assistants, kitchen staff and lunchtime supervisors) which are predominantly female, we expect this is likely to increase opportunities to increase working hours primarily for women or single parents.

We also anticipate this programme having a positive impact on mothers in the workforce where childcare is a barrier for increasing hours.

Disability: We consider that there will be a positive impact for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as these children are more likely to benefit from the socialisation of breakfast clubs. There will be barriers (e.g. transport, space, staffing requirements etc.) for children with SEND in accessing the free breakfast club (mainstream and special schools) which is why we ran a test and learn phase via the Early Adopter scheme. We have worked with these schools to understand any challenges as such they have faced, have enlisted the help of advisors to work with schools to overcome these challenges, and have created a suite of guidance (including case studies) to support all schools to be able to create an inclusive free breakfast club project and support children with SEND to access breakfast clubs.

Race: Some ethnic groups are more likely to come from low-income families. Overall, we therefore assess that the proposed policy will have a positive impact on race because it disproportionately supports low-income families, by enabling children to start the day ready to learn and reduces the number of primary school aged pupils starting the school day hungry, thus enabling more children to start the day ready to learn.

Age: While this measure could be seen as discriminating against secondary aged pupils given this policy is focused on primary age only, this is mitigated by plans to stimulate the existing breakfast club market to support secondary school pupils without government funding, and we will keep this under review. The decision to target primary schools supports the government's priority to deliver the best start in life to all children.

Breakfast club measures are potentially of more valuable benefit for working aged parents as they will have access to free or low-cost before-school childcare. The minimum breakfast club requirement is free breakfast food and at least 30 minutes before-school childcare for primary aged children. For those currently using them intensively, breakfast clubs can be a noticeable cost for families: based on recent patterns of usage and spending, a parent whose child attends a 30-minute breakfast club will save up to £450 a year. For these parents, free breakfast clubs will remove or significantly lower these costs. For parents of primary aged children who are not currently

using before school childcare, the provision enables them to do so at no cost, and to use this time for paid work.

In relation to School Food Standards (SFS), the Department's public policy position since 2014 has been that the standards apply to all academies in full as if they were maintained schools, we do not believe that bringing the legislative position in line with that will materially impact many schools and therefore many pupils with protected characteristics. That said, making this change may lead to changes in food provision for these schools during the rest of the school day. Overall, we think this change is likely to be positive for all pupils, including those with certain protected characteristics under limb 2, as it means they are more likely to be offered healthy and nutritious food at school whenever food is made available.

We judge that there may be some negative impact on pupils with a disability where they have a particular challenge with some foods, if this change means the school limits the food made available. Schools are required, however, to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities, so we judge this impact to be minimal.

Where we are extending the duty to provide free school meals (FSM) to City Technology Colleges, we assess a positive impact across the characteristics of **sex** and **race**, under limb 2. Lone-parent households are more likely to be disadvantaged (and therefore eligible for FSM) than other family structures. We expect single parents, the majority of whom are women will be the primary beneficiaries of this policy. The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity – FSM reduces the financial burden on families by providing lunch free of charge. Some ethnic groups are more likely to have low-income families. Overall, we therefore assess that the proposed policy will have a positive impact on those from minority ethnic groups because it disproportionately supports low-income families, by enabling children to have access to nutritious food, free of charge, that helps them to learn.

School Uniform

Policy context

This measure delivers the government's manifesto commitment to reduce the cost of school uniform by placing a limit on the number of compulsory branded items schools can require as part of their uniform (including PE uniform).

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has positive impacts across the protected characteristics of **race** (limb 2), **age** (limb 2 and 3), **disability** (limbs 2 and 3), **sex** (limb 2), **gender reassignment** (limb 2), **pregnancy and maternity** (limbs 2 and 3), and **religion or belief** (limb 2).

Race: Overall, we consider the impact of this measure on people belonging to minority ethnic groups to be positive. In 2023/24, 37% (37.4% in primary schools and 36.6% in secondary schools) of pupils in England were from an ethnic minority background.⁴⁵ This measure is likely to result in reduced school uniform costs. Although the savings for parents will vary depending on schools' uniform practices, any savings would most benefit those on a low income. Some ethnic groups are more likely to live in income deprived communities, and it is likely that the cost savings from school uniforms will disproportionately benefit these groups. A key objective of the measure is to allow parents increased choice. However, there is a risk that some parents will prioritise buying generic uniform items which are low cost and which could increase their total uniform costs over the school career as replacements might be needed more frequently. This could disproportionately affect low income families who are less able to afford the upfront costs associated with purchasing high quality uniforms at the start of the school year.

For the characteristics of **disability** and **religion or belief**, reducing the number of branded items means increasing the flexibility of the fabrics, styles and adaptive clothing available for pupils in the open market, and a reduction in the cost associated with branded religion-specific items.

Although this measure does not necessarily result in parity of costs in uniform for boys and girls (daywear uniform costs for girls tend to be higher than those for boys, whereas boys' P.E. kit is often more expensive than girls' P.E. kit), it does limit branded uniform for both sexes, giving parents of both sexes more choice over where they can shop so they can better control the cost of uniforms, so will have an overall positive impact for the characteristic of **sex**.

There is a positive impact for **gender reassignment**, where pupils who share the protected characteristic may need to buy additional uniform items, and so will benefit from reduced requirements for branded items and the potentially lower cost of generic items (although we do not collect data we anticipate the number of pupils with this protected characteristic will be very low and many schools already operate a gender neutral uniform policy).

⁴⁵ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics](#) (2024) Explore education statistics

There is a similar benefit for **pregnancy and maternity** where increasing the amount of generic items allows pregnant pupils to prioritise cost when purchasing uniform, as well as choose items that are more suited to their needs.

Mobile Phones in Schools

Policy context

This measure legally requires all schools in England to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State on pupils' use and access of mobile phones and other personal interactive communication devices during the school day. This would make the existing guidance published by the Department for Education on this issue statutory.

In practice, this would mean that all schools would be required, unless they had a good reason not to do so, to prohibit the use of mobile phones in schools, as well as other personal interactive communicative devices (e.g., tablets, laptops, airpods etc.), outside of those provided by the school for educational purposes.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has positive impacts across the protected characteristics of **race** (limb 1), **age** (limb 2 and 3), **disability** (limb 1), **sex** (limb 2), **gender reassignment** (limb 1), **religion or belief** (limb 1) and **sexual orientation** (limb 1).

Age: While this measure could be seen as discriminating against children of school age, who will face restrictions on mobile phone use during the school day compared to adults working in the school, it is considered proportionate and justified because children face higher risks from unrestricted phone use, including cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and reduced concentration which can impact on attainment. We perceive that limiting phone use during school hours helps mitigate these risks and supports children's wellbeing and educational outcomes, thereby reducing inequalities when compared to adults who likely experience fewer digital harms during the work day

The measure also has potential to influence relationships between children and adults in both positive and negative ways. Some pupils may perceive restrictions as unfair or as adult interference, which could create friction. However, the guidance promotes consistency and clarity in enforcement of the mobile phone policy, for all pupils. As such, we expect the measure to foster better classroom relationships over time by reducing distractions and supporting constructive engagement between pupils and teachers.

We therefore expect a positive impact for age overall, as the measure promotes good relations and equal opportunity across all ages, ensuring that every pupil can learn in a calm, safe, and focused environment.

For the characteristic of **disability**, many children with a disability will require access to a mobile phone for specific reasons, such as maintaining regular contact with a carer or using assistive technology to support learning in the classroom. The guidance makes clear that schools should provide reasonable adjustments, exemptions, or flexibility for children with a disability. This may include putting mitigation measures in place or allowing pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that specifies the need

for technology to carry and use their own device. We therefore expect a positive impact on this group overall.

For the characteristics of **race**, **gender reassignment**, **religion or belief** and **sexual orientation**, bullying – including cyber-bullying - can have a severe impact on pupils' mental health, wellbeing, and attainment. Limitations on mobile phone use within schools are expected to have a positive effect in this regard. We expect the updated guidance to have a positive impact by reducing opportunities for cyber-bullying throughout the school day. By reducing opportunities for harmful interactions via mobile phones at school, we expect the updated guidance to have a positive impact contributing to a safer and more inclusive school environment.

There is a positive impact on **sex** as data shows that girls aged 13 to 14 spend about an hour more online than boys the same age.⁴⁶ Some studies also suggest that girls may use social media more and in different ways and that high usage of social media is predictive of mental health wellbeing problems to a greater degree than it is for boys.⁴⁷ Girls are also more likely to be exposed to self-harm and eating disorder content than boys.⁴⁸ The updated guidance is therefore expected to reduce opportunities for accessing such content, thereby offering particular benefits for girls' wellbeing. While boys will also gain from reduced distractions and improved focus, the mental health impact may be more significant for girls. We therefore expect the updated guidance to have a positive impact on this group, helping limit risks related to online activity.

⁴⁶ [Children's Passive Online Measurement report](#)

⁴⁷ Viner et al, 2019

⁴⁸ Barakat et al., 2023

Allergy safety policy in schools

Policy context

The policy introduces a statutory requirement for all schools to have a written allergy safety policy. This requirement will be supported by strengthened statutory guidance and associated non-statutory arrangements setting expectations for safe allergy management, including emergency preparedness and guidance on the availability and use of adrenaline devices.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has positive impacts across the protected characteristics of **age** (limb 2 and 3), **disability** (limbs 1 and 2), and positive/neutral impacts across **religion or belief** (limb 2).

Age: Children and young people are directly affected by allergic risk in school settings. Younger pupils, in particular, rely on adults to recognise symptoms and respond quickly. The policy improves safety and preparedness in environments where children may be unable to self-manage or self-advocate.

Disability: Some allergies, particularly those carrying a risk of anaphylaxis, may constitute a disability under the Equality Act 2010 where they have a substantial and long-term effect. The policy supports disabled pupils by improving consistency in allergy management, emergency preparedness and access to emergency medication (including adrenaline devices), thereby advancing equality of opportunity by reducing barriers to attendance, participation and confidence for disabled pupils and their families.

No disproportionate or adverse impacts have been identified for other protected groups. The policy is universal, proportionate and focuses on health and safety arrangements rather than personal characteristics.

Creating a safer and higher quality education system for every child

Children Not In School and associated safeguarding measures

Policy context

Under current legislation, parents have a duty under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to secure an efficient, full-time education for their child of compulsory school age that is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs the child has (if any). Parents can choose to do this by sending the child to school or educating them otherwise than at school (for example, by home educating them). Local authorities have an existing duty under Section 436A of the Act to identify children of compulsory school age in their areas who are not in school and not receiving a suitable education. However, as most parents currently have no legal duty to inform the local authority they are home educating, local authorities cannot be assured that they are fulfilling their education and safeguarding duties towards all children in their areas.

The Children Not in School measures in this Act will help local authorities to identify all children not in school in their areas, take action to support those that are not receiving a safe, suitable education and introduce additional touchpoints for the most vulnerable children or those with complex needs that are difficult to meet at home. This will help ensure that every child, regardless of their protected characteristics, receives a safe, suitable education.

The legislation does not change or add to the definition of "suitable education"⁴⁹. As is the case now, home educating parents will be able to continue teaching their children using the methods and content of their choosing, provided that the education is suitable and, where relevant, in the child's best interests.

The new legislation will:

- a. Create compulsory registers of children not in school (CNIS) in each local authority area in England and in Wales, and a duty on local authorities to support the children on their registers. This support duty will also require local authorities in England to host bi-annual engagement forums with their home education communities.
- b. Introduce changes to the School Attendance Order process to make it more efficient, reducing the time children may spend in unsuitable education (this process will also be used where parents do not comply with their new duty to provide information for CNIS registers).

⁴⁹ [Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities](#)

- c. Create a requirement whereby a parent will need local authority consent to home educate if a child registered at a school is:
 - i. subject to an enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989,
 - ii. on a child protection plan, or previously on a child protection plan in the past five years, or
 - iii. at a special school maintained by a local authority, special academy or non-maintained special school, or at an independent school which is specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with special educational needs, where the child became a registered pupil at that school under arrangements made by the local authority.

- d. Create a power whereby if a child is subject to a s47 Children Act enquiry, on a child protection plan or was previously on a child protection plan in the last five years and is already being home educated, the local authority will be able to require them to attend school.

- e. Introduce a requirement for local authorities to consider the home environment and other learning environments when:
 - i. determining whether or not children should be required to attend school.
 - ii. a child is first registered on the Children Not in School registers

- f. Introduce a pilot scheme in certain local authorities whereby parents must attend a formal meeting with the local authority if they wish to withdraw their child from school for home education. This scheme would take place in no more than 30% of local authorities in England and no more than 30% of local authorities in Wales and would run for at least two years but not more than five years. The purpose of these pilots would be to understand whether requiring attendance at an initial meeting could better support parents to make fully informed decisions about home education and strengthen collaborative relationships between families and local authorities. The pilot would also explore whether this approach helps identify educational or wellbeing needs earlier so that appropriate support can be offered, and provides an opportunity to discuss the safeguarding and welfare of the child.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has positive impacts across the protected characteristics of **age** (limbs 2 and 3), **disability** (limb 2), **race (limbs 2 and 3)**, **religion or belief** (limbs 2 and 3), and **sex** (limb 2).

Age: older children are likely to be disproportionately impacted by this measure, as over a third of children in receipt of elective home education (EHE) in England are expected to be in either year groups 10 or 11.⁵⁰ The figures are similar in Wales with the most common age for home educated pupils being 15⁵¹. Some children within this age cohort will take exams, such as GCSEs, and under the support duty, local authorities will be required to give parents of children on their Children Not in School registers information on access to GCSE examinations if requested and unless unreasonable to do so.

There will also be a positive impact for children of compulsory school age who are subject to a current section 47 enquiry, on a child protection plan, previously subject to a child protection plan in the last five years and/or is at a special school maintained by a local authority, special academy or non-maintained special school, or at an independent special school under arrangements made by a local authority. Parents of these children will be required to seek consent from the local authority before their child can be removed from school to be home educated. Where children subject to the aforementioned child protection processes are already being home educated, local authorities will have the power to require them to attend school if it is in their best interests. This additional oversight will help ensure that these children receive suitable education and/ or education that is in their best interests.

The measures may also have a positive outcome on these children's educational outcomes. As of March 2024, children on a child protection plan in England were half as likely to achieve the expected standard at Key Stage 2 compared to the overall pupil population. Children in the key social care groups also perform less well than their peers across all Key Stage 4 measures. Furthermore, pupils on child protection plans had the highest proportion of pupils (57.2%) who were persistent absentees.⁵²

While these measures will not directly impact children who are not of compulsory school age, the other safeguarding measures included in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act will complement and support wider multi-agency child protection and safeguarding approaches in England. This includes, through multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs), access to a range of specialist expertise and support in relation to child protection needs and will therefore positively impact on all children and young people in England, through ensuring they are appropriately protected regardless of their age. As in England, in Wales, safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. The Welsh Government expects individuals, groups and organisations offering activities or services to follow the following published by the Welsh Government *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014)*⁵³: [Working together to safeguard people: national action plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse](#). This demonstrates reasonable steps are being taken to ensure the safety of children and adults at risk.

⁵⁰ [Elective home education, Autumn term 2025/26 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁵¹ [Pupils educated other than at school: September 2024 to August 2025 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁵² [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year \(2024\) Explore education statistics](#)

⁵³ [Working together to safeguard people: national action plan on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse](#) (2014) Welsh Government

Disability: 16% of EHE children in England recorded by local authorities in October 2025 had an additional requirement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) support, while 7% of EHE children in England had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). This compares with 14% and 5% respectively for the overall school population in England.⁵⁴ In March 2024, pupils in the key social care groups were over twice as likely to have a special educational need (SEN) than the overall pupil population.⁵⁵ Data has not been collected in Wales but anecdotal evidence from Local Authorities in Wales indicates that parental dissatisfaction with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision in schools is a factor in deregistration.

The measures will pilot mandatory meetings in some local authorities in England and Wales. During these meetings, parents will be advised on their responsibilities when home educating and will discuss any support needs that the child may have and how those needs could be met. During this discussion, we would expect the local authority to discuss with the parent impacts on any SEN support that the child is receiving in school – for example through an EHCP. The local authority will also explore the reason the parents are withdrawing their child from school. This may help identify the parents who feel forced to withdrawing and identify opportunities to put in the right support., The most recent EHE data showed that in Autumn 2025/26, 4% of EHE children in England gave SEND school dissatisfaction as the primary reason for being EHE, while 16% of EHE children in England gave mental health as the primary reason³⁴. This measure is intended to help support these children and therefore may have a positive impact for children with disabilities under limbs 2 and 3.

The requirements for local authorities to consider the suitability of the home and other learning environments at first registration and during the School Attendance Order processes, and the accompanying powers to request to visit the child in their home, may have a negative impact on children with certain special educational needs who may find such visits difficult. However, this will be offset by clearly setting out in statutory guidance how to manage visits when children have additional needs. The Department also intends to develop a training package for local authorities on their new duties. Additionally, these home visits are most important for children with certain disabilities or special educational needs as they may have very specific educational environmental needs to be able to learn and it is important that the local authority ensure their home and other learning environments are meeting these needs.

The duty on parents to provide information for local authority CNIS registers may help ensure that children in England and Wales who may require additional support due to disabilities or other SEN or additional learning needs (ALN) are identified. Local authorities will have a duty to provide support through advice and information to these children should their parents request it.

⁵⁴ [Elective home education, Autumn term 2025/26 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁵⁵ [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England \(2024\) Explore education statistics](#)

On the other hand, the requirement on parents to give information on education providers for registers could also have a disproportionate negative impact on parents of children with disabilities or special educational needs. Some children with special educational needs or disabilities may attend many different providers for short periods of time, which could result in these parents being required to give more information than other parents. However, this will be mitigated by the provision for the government to prescribe a threshold, so registers only have to include (and parents only have to give) information about individuals or organisations that provide education to a child that exceeds a certain amount of time. We will consult on this threshold to ensure it is set at the right level to minimise burden on parents while supporting local authorities to collect necessary information. Parents will also only be required to update this information, and information about the time the child spends in education only when requested by the local authority, at a minimum of once every 12 months, and no more frequently than once every three months.

We anticipate that the measures aimed at requiring consent to home-educate for children in school who are subject to a current s.47 enquiry, on a child protection plan, previously on a child protection plan in the last five years or are at a special school maintained by a local authority, special academy or non-maintained special school, or at an independent special school under arrangements made by a local authority to have a positive impact on those children by virtue of this protected characteristic under limb 2. This measure is intended to help ensure that those children cannot be moved into a potentially unsuitable learning environment, where they will not receive a suitable education and/or would be at risk of harm. As a result, those children who have complex educational needs or other needs that are being supported in a special school due to their SEN/ALN will have access to more equality of opportunity

Religion or belief: According to the Department for Education's Elective Home Education data collection, as of Autumn 2025, 1% of parents known to local authorities reported home educating their children primarily due to religious reasons⁵⁶. However, we do not have a breakdown by religious belief, but we know anecdotally that parents of all faiths and none choose to home educate. Broadly, we anticipate that the Children Not in School measures will have a neutral impact on parents who choose to home educate for religious reasons. This is because the Children Not in School measures will not prevent parents from educating their children in line with their religious beliefs, providing that the education is suitable (as is the case now) or, where relevant, that home education is in their best interests.

We have identified that particular impacts may be felt by the Haredi Jewish community, since we are aware that, in this community, some children attend unregistered settings and receive home education alongside. For more information see the section on IESS: Registration of full-time settings (see paragraphs 219-228). We consider that there will be an overall positive impact on children in these communities as the Children Not in School registers will enable local authorities to better identify children not in school in their areas. The new requirements on local authorities to provide advice and information to parents of

⁵⁶ [Release home - Elective home education - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

registered children on request and to host bi-annual engagement forums may have a positive impact in providing more avenues for parents in these communities to engage with and receive tailored support from the local authority which could positively impact their child's education.

Additionally, if local authorities identify that a child does not appear to be receiving a suitable education, the improvements to the School Attendance Order process will ensure that they are registered at a school more quickly, minimising the time they spend in receipt of an unsuitable education or no education, or at risk of harm. The government's wider ambition to ensure that schools are welcoming, engaging and inclusive spaces for all pupils will help these children to thrive at school. Children who are receiving a suitable education (which can include religious teaching) in a suitable and safe learning environment will not be required to attend school via a School Attendance Order.

Race: through our engagement with local authorities and groups that represent EHE families, we recognise that the CNIS proposals may have a disproportionate impact on those of Jewish ethnicity and the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) community. CNIS registers will not curtail parents' rights to instil in their children their cultural and religious values and beliefs. The CNIS proposals will not provide local authorities with additional powers to mandate the content of home education. Families can continue to teach in line with their values and culture provided that the education being received by the child is suitable and, in cases where a child is on a child protection plan, previously on a children protection plan in the last five years or subject to a section 47 enquiry, it is in the child's best interests to receive education otherwise than at school.

In the Autumn 2025 EHE data collection, local authorities recorded that 4.3% of the EHE population in England were known to them to be GRT. This is in comparison to 0.4% of children recorded to be GRT in the school population in England.⁵⁷ Whilst equivalent data is not held for Wales, some local authorities have indicated that they have large numbers of GRT children in their known EHE cohort, particularly in some of the rural local authorities. Mandatory CNIS registers in each local authority will help local authorities build a better picture of GRT families who are home educating in their areas and the support they might need to ensure their children receive a suitable education. The requirement on parents to inform the local authority of the child's previous address if they have moved in the last 12 months may disproportionately impact GRT families. However, we believe that this minor additional administrative burden could have a positive impact on GRT families. It will support the current local authority to engage with the child's previous local authority so relevant information from their registers can be shared, ensuring continuity of records for these children. The local authority support duty included in the CNIS proposals will ensure that if GRT families whose children are included on CNIS registers request support from their local authority that the authority will be required to provide some form of support. This could help narrow the attainment gap between GRT children and children of other ethnicities (where, for example, in the 2018 and 2019 school year, 19% of White Gypsy or Roma pupils, and 26% of Irish Traveller pupils met

⁵⁷ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

the expected standard in key stage 2 reading, writing and maths. These were the 2 lowest percentages out of all ethnic groups).⁵⁸

We will encourage families to engage with registers by publicising the message that CNIS registers will not impact families' ability to teach in line with their values (provided that the education being received by the child is suitable) during the legislative process, in the run-up to implementation, and post-implementation through relevant stakeholder networks

However, we recognise that despite these efforts some families may still choose to not engage with CNIS registers. These families are likely to be negatively impacted as they will be subject to sanctions for not providing information for the registers. However, the sanction is that the School Attendance Order process will be initiated, and this process gives families the opportunity to provide evidence that their child is receiving a suitable education. It is not intended to criminalise parents, and parents will only be committing an offence if they breach the order by removing their child from the school or failing to enrol at the school named in the order without following the proper procedure of having the school attendance order revoked or amended. Within Wales, the development of the Children Missing Education database will enable Welsh Local authorities to be aware of all their school aged learners (provided that the families have registered with G.P. surgeries) and follow up on any learners who have not formally informed the local authority that they are home educating.

We also recognise that some parents may wish to engage with the registers but could face additional difficulties in doing so. For example, there may be a negative impact on parents of eligible children who do not have reliable access to the internet where local authorities request forms to be completed online. This could impact ethnic groups who are nomadic, but also Haredi Jewish communities where internet usage is discouraged. There could also be accessibility issues for parents of eligible children whose first language is not English. We will aim to mitigate these negative impacts by building on current practices for similar registers, such as the electoral register, where there are existing systems that enable nomadic people to provide information for example. We will also engage with community representatives to understand which potential solutions might work best for various groups, and then highlight these solutions in our statutory guidance to local authorities (which will be publicly consulted on in England), so they can consider how best to publicise the registration duty and make it accessible to all eligible families in their areas.

We have considered whether ethnic minority children and families may be disproportionately impacted by the requirement for parents to gain local authority consent before they can home educate their child if they are subject to an ongoing s. 47 enquiry, on a child protection plan or previously on a children protection plan in the last five years. There is evidence that ethnic minority children are over-represented in children's social care. For example, research published in 2022 found that Mixed and White ethnicity children had the highest rates of conversion from a children's social care referral

⁵⁸ [Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller ethnicity summary \(2022\). GOV.UK](#)

to a child protection plan (15% and 13% respectively)⁵⁹. After controlling for children's demographics and social care history, children of Mixed White and Black Caribbean ethnicity were around 30% more likely than White British children to have a child protection plan following a referral.

We believe that the local authority consent proposal will result in a positive impact under limb 2 for children from ethnic minority backgrounds. Alongside other measures to establish MACPTs in England, increasing the involvement of education settings in safeguarding and strengthening multi-agency information sharing, it will help ensure appropriate multi-agency identification, oversight, decision-making and support of and for all children at risk of harm - both inside and outside of the home.

Sex: The Department for Education's 2025/2026 EHE data collection records that 52% of EHE children were reported as female and 48% of EHE children were reported as male (less than 1% were unknown). This compares to 49% of the overall school population as female and 51% male as at January 2025. There is no published breakdown of EHE gender data in Wales, but anecdotally the percentages are very similar to England. This means that female children are likely to be slightly over-represented in EHE and therefore, where the overall CNIS proposals aim to ensure less children slip under the radar and more receive a suitable and safe education, there may be a slight disproportionate positive impact on female children.

Anecdotally, we hear that most home-educating parents are women and therefore in practice the burden of ensuring that their child receives a suitable education falls to them (even if, in law, the duty sits with all parents). The proposal for the piloting of mandatory meetings before children can be withdrawn from school for home education and the new duty on local authorities to provide support to home educating parents whose child is registered on their CNIS registers, including bi-annual engagement forums may, therefore, also have a disproportionate positive impact on home educating women or women that wish to withdraw their children from school for home education. For women who live in a mandatory meeting pilot area and wish to home educate, they will benefit from meeting with the local authority before removing their child from school by receiving information on the duty on parents to provide a suitable education, the duties of local authority Elective Home Education officers (including the support duty), any support that the child may need, etc. This will help ensure they are well-prepared before beginning home education. Women whose children are registered on Children Not in School registers will benefit from the enhanced engagement and tailored advice and support available via the new duties on local authorities to offer biannual engagement forums and advice and information on the child's education (if requested to do so by the parent). This engagement and advice may support them to provide their child with a suitable education – for example, through the local authority signposting to useful resources. There may be a minor negative impact on women in terms of them giving up time to attend engagement forums (but these are voluntary) and, if they live in a pilot area, mandatory meetings. However, we will mitigate this by publicly consulting on the statutory guidance which will provide more details on how these meetings and forums should operate in practice.

⁵⁹ [Ethnicity and children's social care](#) (2022). GOV.UK

There may also be a positive impact on male children in the Haredi Jewish community. We know that many of these children are currently not attending registered schools and therefore will be eligible for registration on Children Not in School registers (further detail on this is included in the Independent Education and School Safeguarding section).

The CNIS registers will help identify these children. Improvements to the School Attendance Order process, alongside the requirement for local authorities to consider the home and other learning environments, when a child is first registered on the Children Not In school registers, or when determining whether a preliminary notice or school attendance order should be issued to require attendance at school, will better enable local authorities to take action if it appears that a child is not receiving a suitable education or, where relevant, that home education is not in their best interests.

We know that there are slightly more boys than girls in the children's social care system. Males are also over-represented in relation to certain harms (such as child criminal exploitation), whilst females are over-represented in others (such as child sexual exploitation). It is important to note, however, that children of both sexes can experience all types of extra-familial harm. For children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP), as of 31 March 2025, 50% were male and 47% were female. It is therefore possible that there may be a slightly more positive impact for males than females due to the requirement for local authority consent for these children to be removed from school. The CNIS registers, when implemented, will help provide us with a clearer picture of home educated children subject to Child Protection Plans

In England, these and wider safeguarding Act measures will improve the identification and response to all types of harm, regardless of gender. For example, MACPTs will be expected to respond to all harm types, embedding a child protection system that ensures that children who are likely to experience or experiencing significant harm are protected and the needs of all families are met in the wider system. The increased involvement of education settings in safeguarding partnerships locally will also strengthen information-sharing and multi-agency identification of and support for all children where significant harm is a concern. Within Wales, the Welsh Government's position is that, within Wales, safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and it expects individuals, groups and organisations offering activities or services to follow the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014)⁶⁰. This will demonstrate reasonable steps are being taken to ensure the safety of children and adults at risk.

Independent Education and School Safeguarding (IESS): suspension of private school registration and boarding

Policy context

This measure will introduce a new legislative power to temporarily suspend the registration of an independent educational institution. This would supplement and support

⁶⁰ *Working together to safeguard people* (2014) Welsh Government

our existing powers to close an independent school (or other independent educational institution) via deregistration by allowing the Secretary of State to instead suspend an institution's registration for up to 12 weeks (extendable for further tranches of up to 12 weeks as needed). In addition, there will be a power to impose a "stop boarding" requirement to be used in conjunction with suspension of registration. It will be a criminal offence for the proprietor to provide education or supervised activity at an institution whilst registration is suspended, or boarding is provided in breach of a stop boarding requirement. The powers will give the department greater flexibility to act in cases where an independent setting, through failing to meet the relevant standards, is placing children at risk of harm.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact for the protected characteristics of **age**, **disability**, **race**, **religion or belief**, **sex**, and **sexual orientation** under limb 2. This proposal makes it easier for the Secretary of State to intervene against any independent educational institution which, in not meeting the requisite standards, is placing children at risk of harm. While it cannot be anticipated which particular settings will be intervened against in this way, this measure will protect children who attend any setting which is subject to this measure. These children, some of whom will share a relevant protected characteristic, will receive a safer education as a result.

The intended effect of the proposals is that settings which present a risk of harm to children will have their registration suspended, thereby preventing any continuing risk to the children attending such a setting. The settings which to date have been subject to the broadly analogous power under s120 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 have been predominantly or entirely attended by children with special educational needs. There will be a positive impact if the children concerned receive a safer education, either at an improved setting following a period of suspension, or at an alternative setting, albeit with a great short-term impact on these children (and their families) from their education being disrupted.

However, we are content that this short-term disruption is justified by the need to ensure that all children receive a safe education, and this measure will bring long-term benefits towards that aim. It is also unacceptable that a regulatory system which is designed to secure improvement should allow institutions not meeting the regulatory standards, and thereby placing children at risk of harm, to continue to operate in ways which place children at risk.

IESS: Material changes

Policy context

Registered independent schools must seek the Secretary of State's approval before making certain changes. These "material changes" are changes: of proprietor, address, age range, capacity, whether a school is single sex or co-educational, whether it has boarders and whether it admits children with special educational needs. This system currently ensures that registered independent schools cannot vary their operations

beyond those for which they were originally registered (e.g. a school originally registered to cater for 100 children cannot, without approval, cater for 1000). The system will apply, because of other changes made by the Act, to certain other full-time settings in addition to independent schools.

Instead of it being a material change to admit or cease to admit pupils with SEN, it will become a material change to become or cease to be a 'special institution' (i.e. one specially organised to make special educational provision for students with special educational needs) and in the case of such an institution, to change the type(s) of special educational needs that it caters for. These changes will therefore require prior approval from the Secretary of State.

It will also become a material change when an institution starts to occupy a building, for student use, for a period of six months or more (or ceases to occupy such a building for more than six months) and therefore prior approval from the Secretary of State will be required.

The discretion to approve an application for material change will be changed. At present, we are unable to approve a material change if we cannot be satisfied that the institution will meet the relevant standards following the change, even if in our opinion the change is beneficial for the children educated there. The Act will allow an application to be approved in such circumstances, provided the standards are likely to be met within a reasonable time.

Finally, we wish to increase our available regulatory options in situations where an institution has made an unauthorised material change. The only legislative recourse at present, directed at unapproved material changes, is for the Secretary of State to de-register the institution. This would have a significant impact, not least to the pupils attending the institution, disrupting their education. Consequently, it is rarely considered except in the most egregious case. The imposition of a relevant restriction, which is being introduced as an additional option, could prevent an institution admitting new pupils, from making use of any part of its premises or from carrying on certain parts of its operations. It is, therefore, a more flexible tool, has the potential to be a proportionate response to an unapproved material change and is one that may be directed at addressing associated breaches of the standards related to, for example, the quality of education or the safeguarding of pupils.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of **disability** under limbs 2 and 3. The SEN aspect of the proposals should lead to better regulation of independent settings specially organised for SEN (for example, by allowing them to expand into other types of SEN provision only if they have suitable arrangements), to the benefit of prospective pupils. This would increase their equality of opportunity by making it more likely that their education will be suitable for their needs.

A negative impact on **disability** under limb 3 has been identified, as proposals may limit the choice of setting as settings will not be permitted, without prior approval, to cater for children with special educational needs. However, since it is intended that approval will only be refused where a setting is not making appropriate provision for SEN, this

negative impact is balanced by the benefits of ensuring the settings used are safer and better suited for pupils. Although the proposals might mean that some families are unable to have children attend the setting they wish, the department's view is that it is in children's long-term interests that their special educational needs are met by settings properly organised to deal with their needs in order that they receive a more suitable education to better equip them for the opportunities they get from education and in adult life.

IESS: Private school de-registration - appeals

Policy context

This measure will change how an appeal against a decision to deregister an independent educational institution because of breaches of the regulatory standards, is determined. This measure will reshape how the First-tier Tribunal ("the Tribunal") considers appeals against such decisions. In particular, the Tribunal will have to have due regard to whether the institution will meet the standards on an on-going basis and the burden of proof will be placed on the appealing proprietor to demonstrate this. This will mean that appeals in these cases may be resolved more quickly and failing settings closed sooner.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have both a positive impact on the protected characteristics of **religion or belief** and **race** under limb 2, and a negative impact on those same characteristics under limb 3. The group specifically impacted will be those persons of Jewish, Muslim and (some variants of) the Christian faith, and those persons of racial groups most likely to adhere to the faiths listed above.

The intended effect is settings which consistently fail to meet the regulatory standards over a significant period should be closed more easily, thus preventing the children attending them from receiving a poor education, or there being inadequate safeguarding of them, for many years. Such settings have often in the past been predominantly or entirely attended by children with the stated characteristics and we have no reason to think this will not be the case in future. Similarly to suspension of registration and imposing a stop boarding requirement, to some extent this proposal should also have a deterrent effect by encouraging proprietors to improve and consistently meet the standards, with the knowledge that they have a lesser chance of succeeding on appeal against de-registration.

These proposals may lead to more settings being closed, which are wholly or predominantly attended by children with the stated protected characteristics, because they cannot meet the applicable standards. Closure would involve disruption to the education of children attending those settings (even if it is ultimately intended to secure them a better education), to the families of such children if they need to make alternative arrangements for that education, and to the owners and staff of such settings, most of whom will be likely to share the same faith and race characteristics. For the children concerned, there will still be the opportunity to attend settings that are compliant with the regulatory standards. However, if they are home educated (just as if they remained in

unregulated full-time settings) and are provided with a relatively poor standard of education, that would affect their equality of opportunity as this education would be less suitable (and possibly less safe) than that provided to children attending institutions which do meet regulatory requirements. If the deterrent to proprietors works in some cases, then in those instances this negative effect would be less likely to arise.

Even though there are potential negative effects, these are likely, for most children, to be shorter-term than the positive effects which are sought in terms of the education the children concerned would receive over their whole time at school. In the longer term, the better education received should advance equality of opportunity for the children concerned. It is also unacceptable that a regulatory system which is designed to secure improvement should be subverted over significant periods by settings deliberately not, or being incapable of, meeting the standards, and in doing so disadvantaging the children affected, or potentially put them at risk.

IESS: Due diligence and standard setting

Policy context

This measure will create a regulation-making power for the Secretary of State to impose standards that permit the Secretary of State to determine whether an individual is a “fit and proper person” before approving them as an individual independent school proprietor or, for example, Chair of a proprietor body of such a school. The regulation-making power will also apply in relation to other independent educational institutions. Further express powers are also to be provided to make standards that require the proprietor of an independent educational institution to have regard to guidance issued, or a document published, by the Secretary of State.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of **religion or belief** and **race**, specifically those persons of Jewish, Muslim and (some variants of) the Christian faith, and those persons of racial groups most likely to adhere to the faiths listed above.

This measure will have a positive impact against all three limbs of the public sector equality duty. This is because it will help ensure that those in charge of independent educational institutions are suitable for this role and for ensuring that regulatory standards are met. Meeting the standards, which we intend should remain the same as those in the Independent Schools Standards) will bring positive benefits against the first limb of the PSED, since some of these standards are concerned with the removal or reduction of discriminatory behaviour in and outside of the settings concerned. Similarly, this measure will bring positive benefits against the other two limbs of the PSED by reducing the number of children who, as a result of attending a setting overseen by an unsuitable proprietor, receive an unsafe and/or poor-quality education. These benefits are realised by providing a mechanism whereby those not deemed by the Secretary of State to be “fit and proper” to be an individual proprietor or have responsibility for a proprietor body of an independent school will be prevented from holding such a position.

This will also have a deterrent effect. With the knowledge that they have a lesser chance of succeeding at becoming a proprietor, or being involved in the proprietor body, of an independent setting, potentially “unsuitable” individuals will be discouraged from making such an application. This means the benefits of this proposal will not be measured based solely on the number of applicants deemed not “fit and proper”.

IESS: Ofsted powers of entry and investigation

Policy context

This measure will give Ofsted greater powers to investigate certain potentially criminal behaviour (the “relevant offences” specified in the legislation) in connection with independent schools (and any other independent educational institution). We will also strengthen a court’s powers with regards to individuals who have acted in ways which have put children at risk of harm and been convicted for conducting an unregistered independent educational institution.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact for the protected characteristics of **age**, **disability**, **race**, **religion or belief**, **sex**, and **sexual orientation** under limb 2.

The purpose of this change is to facilitate the investigation and identification of settings where a relevant criminal offence (as specified in the legislation) is being or has been committed, or that evidence of the commission of a relevant offence may be found. Settings which are the site of, or contain evidence of, a relevant offence may be placing children at risk of harm since settings operating outside of or in breach of our regulatory regime are potentially harmful. Being able to better identify and so act against those responsible should mean that more children attend settings which are acting in accordance with a regulatory regime intended to help children achieve and thrive. These children, some of whom will share a relevant protected characteristic, will receive a higher-quality, safer education as a result.

Further, since this policy makes it easier to identify criminal behaviour which puts children at risk of harm, it also disincentivises this behaviour happening in the first place, so reducing the identified risk. Similarly, the prevention orders will further limit children’s exposure to individuals that have operated unregistered independent schools and may try and do so again in the future. As a result, fewer unlawful schools should begin operation, and fewer registered schools should breach relevant restrictions placed on them (and work harder to avoid a situation in which a relevant restriction is justified). This should further reduce the number of children who receive their education in settings which are acting unlawfully and in ways which are placing children at risk of harm.

This policy should therefore benefit all children who currently attend settings which are not abiding by the regulatory regime intended to keep children safe, and any children attending such settings in future. The parents of these children should also benefit from their children receiving a safer education.

IESS: Registration of full-time settings

Policy context

Chapter 1 of Part 4 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (“the 2008 Act”) concerns the regulation and inspection of independent educational institutions, which include independent schools. We wish to change the settings which are regulated in this way so that the legislation applies to independent schools and to other settings which offer a full-time education to children of compulsory school age. In addition, we are removing the possibility of some part-time educational institutions being regulated under Chapter 1 of Part 4, but there will be no practical impact from this particular change, given that the relevant provisions concerning these part-time providers have not been brought into effect.

The intention behind these changes is to promote the principle that institutions which provide full-time education to children should be regulated to ensure that they provide an education which safeguards children’s health, safety and welfare, and which gives them the opportunity to achieve and thrive.

Finally, we are setting out in statute, a non-exhaustive list of factors that are relevant to deciding whether education is being provided full-time, this will help provide clarity to proprietors of educational institutions as to whether they are operating on a full-time basis – and so should register – or otherwise.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **age** (limbs 2 and 3), **disability** (all limbs), **gender reassignment** (limb 3), **pregnancy and maternity** (limbs 2 and 3), **race** (all limbs), **sex** (limb 2 and 3), and **sexual orientation** (all limbs). Under limb 2, advancing equality of opportunity, there is a mixed impact on **religion or belief**, but a positive impact for limbs 1 and 3.

The overall intended effect of the proposals will be to bring into the regulatory regime which already applies to independent schools, more full-time educational institutions. This will mean that more settings are, among other things, subject to regular inspection against prescribed standards and which gives the children attending the opportunity to achieve and thrive. This will improve the quality of educational provision for any child attending one of these settings – either because the setting they currently attend will register with the Secretary of State and be subject to regular inspection against the relevant standards (so ensuring, for example, the quality of education provided), or will amend the provision they offer so that they operate “part time” (and so avoid regulation), encouraging the children who attend these settings to instead attend another, registered setting. Either scenario will see more children of compulsory school age receiving a safer and more suitable education.

We have identified that some boys aged 13+ of the Haredi Jewish faith, their parents (who will be Haredi Jewish), and the proprietors/staff of certain Haredi Jewish educational institutions (who will most likely be men of the Haredi Jewish faith), will be particularly impacted by this policy. This is because we have identified that some Haredi

Jewish “yeshivas”, settings which provide a very narrow curriculum on a full-time basis, will be brought into regulation through this measure.

We anticipate the impact on this group to be neutral. This is because we anticipate that those responsible for the yeshivas which are brought into regulation via this proposal may initially respond not by registering with the Secretary of State but instead changing their provision to become part-time education providers. We also think it unlikely that the result of this change to “part time” provision will be that the boys who currently attend these settings will attend a registered school for their full-time education. We believe this to be because of a known shortage of school places considered suitable by members of the Haredi community. Instead, we think it most likely that, in the short-term, the education received by these children will not change – it will continue to be a mix of “yeshiva study” at an unregistered (but part-time) setting (or possibly several part-time settings) supplemented by elective home education. However, the measure to create registers of children not in school means that these home educated children must be included on their local authority’s register. These local authorities would then be better able to undertake existing responsibilities to ensure education being received is suitable and children are safe.

We expect objection to this measure on the basis it runs counter to inviolate community traditions which value the education offered by yeshivas. However, we believe this measure remains justifiable for two reasons. First, the right of children to a safe education that suitably equips them for adult life should be protected and promoted by legislation. Second, our measures do not prevent children receiving a religious education but mean that arrangements for a religious education should not prevent children receiving a suitable “secular” education also. The department has not seen evidence which suggests this measure is inherently incompatible with traditional practices, or that it is impossible for children to receive an intensive religious education in addition to a “secular” education in a registered setting and know of no other religious communities which operate this model.

We also expect objection on the basis that educational settings for children of Haredi Jewish faith may not be able to meet all of the regulatory standards (should they remain as they currently stand and if these were the standards to be met as a condition of registration) and that the department establishing this as the bar for registration is itself discriminatory since, for example, the requirements of the current standards with regards to teaching respect by reference to protected characteristics is incompatible with Hasidic Jewish faith. This means that even if the community wished to register yeshivas or any other new educational institution with the Secretary of State it would be very unlikely that it could successfully register (since likely compliance with the standards is needed to register). However, we are aware of other religious groups, where their beliefs could preclude against teaching about protected characteristics, which have satisfied the relevant requirements of the standards. We also believe that this policy will bring wider societal benefits by encouraging more children to receive an education which promotes the development of well-rounded individuals.

We think it is important and justifiable to proceed, both to promote the principle that full-time educational institutions should be subject to regulation so that, among other things,

the Secretary of State can intervene in cases of serious wellbeing risk to children, and to send a signal that we do not consider a full-time education provided by a setting offering a very narrow curriculum to be “suitable” and appropriate for children’s needs. We anticipate that this signal will play a role in bringing about behavioural change. In the immediate term, some settings which want to continue operating full time will make the necessary changes to their curriculum and register with the Secretary of State. This will immediately bring children who otherwise would not have been in a regulated setting, into a setting subject to the regulatory regime and regular inspection. A longer-term impact of the signal the policy sends will be, we anticipate, to encourage future generations to develop sensitive approaches to overcome the obstacles which currently inhibit registration, bringing positive benefits to the children attending these settings, some of whom may share a relevant protected characteristic.

IESS: Ofsted information sharing

Policy context

Under section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 the Secretary of State may approve (or withdraw approval from) a body to carry out inspections of registered independent schools (instead of by Ofsted). At present, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), a body approved to inspect “association” independent schools, is the only approved inspectorate.⁶¹ In addition, under section 87A of the Children Act 1989, the Secretary of State may appoint persons other than Ofsted to inspect boarding in schools or colleges. We wish to clarify the circumstances under which information can be provided by Ofsted to ISI (and other inspectorates which may be appointed), and change the existing reporting arrangements under which Ofsted reports on ISI (and other inspectorates appointed).

Equalities impact analysis

These are technical changes concerning the governing relationship between inspectorates. While they will improve the performance of those inspectorates, primarily by facilitating the development of a “relationship of equals” these minor changes will not directly affect any individuals or groups. The three limbs of the PSED are therefore not directly engaged by this proposal.

Strengthening the Teacher Misconduct Regime

Policy context

The Education Act 2002 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) enables the Secretary of State to regulate the teaching profession in England. The detail of the teacher misconduct process is set out in secondary legislation – The Teachers Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012. The changes we are proposing will:

⁶¹ Association schools are schools which are, or whose head teacher is, a full member of one of the following associations: GSA, HMC, IAPS, ISA, the Society of Heads, AGBIS, ISBA.

- Broaden the scope of the teacher misconduct provisions to include persons who commit misconduct when not employed as a teacher, but who have previously carried out teaching work.
- Broaden the scope of the teacher misconduct provisions to include a wider range of education settings to include;
 - Further Education Colleges (and those designated as being within the FE sector under the Further Education Act 1992);
 - Providers of post-16 education as set out in section 16 of the Education Act 2002 – i.e. special post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers; Independent Educational Institutions, Independent Learning Providers and
 - Online education providers.
- Enable the Secretary of State to consider referrals of serious teacher misconduct regardless of how the matter comes to her attention.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a neutral impact across all protected characteristics and limbs for the PSED. A key benchmark used to determine whether a teacher's behaviour is incompatible with being a teacher, and so should warrant being prohibited from teaching, is whether the behaviour was a serious departure from the personal and professional conduct elements of the Teachers' Standards. In developing these standards, consideration was given to their impact in relation to equalities and no evidence was found to suggest that introducing such Teachers' Standards would have a negative impact or indirectly discriminate against any particular group of teachers.

This policy affects those within the school workforce who are employed or engaged to undertake teaching work (as defined in legislation) in specified settings (as set out in legislation) and who commit serious misconduct and are referred to the TRA for investigation.

Annually, prohibition is imposed on less than 0.03% of the total teaching workforce and is limited in its effect to preventing the individual from carrying out teaching work (as defined in legislation) only. Since the establishment of the current arrangements in April 2012, there have been fewer than 13,000 referrals. As such, there will continue to be a wide range of employed roles both within the educational sector and elsewhere that would utilise the skills gained as a teacher and which a prohibited teacher could lawfully carry out.

Data shows that three quarters of teachers are female, and a quarter are male, and therefore the proposed changes would be expected to have a disproportionate effect on women – we believe this would be justifiable given the purpose of the policy. However, the prohibition figures show that only around a quarter of prohibitions are female teachers, and around three quarters of prohibitions are male teachers, which demonstrates that although the teaching workforce is made up of more women than men, it is a majority of male teachers rather than female teachers that are likely to be subject to

teacher misconduct proceedings that result in prohibition. Again, though, this is justifiable given the purpose of the policy.

The TRA does not collect data regarding the proportion of teachers who share other protected characteristics.

Driving high and rising standards for every child

School teachers' qualifications and induction

Policy context

This measure delivers a manifesto commitment to require state-funded primary and secondary schools to recruit teachers who have or are working towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The requirement will apply to teachers who commence their employment with an academy school or trust from the implementation date, including those who have previous teaching experience in primary or secondary settings. Some unqualified teachers will continue to be subject to the specified exemptions to the requirement for QTS, currently set out in Schedule 1 to the Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012. We are updating and clarifying the regulations that set out the exemptions and from the implementation date they will cover those working towards QTS through an employment-based route; overseas trained teachers, who can work in English schools without QTS for up to 4 years; teachers who undertake specialised work under the supervision of a qualified teacher, instructors with specialist qualifications or experience and teachers of vocational subjects. Teachers gaining QTS from the implementation date will then also be required to satisfactorily complete statutory induction if they are employed as a teacher in specified academies. As most academies already voluntarily require teachers to serve induction the impact of a mandatory induction requirement is anticipated to be minimal.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact for **disability** (limb 3) and **race** (limbs 2 and 3). There are potential negative impacts under limb 2 across the protected characteristics of **age** and **sex**, and under limb 1 for **race**.

We know that high quality teaching is the most important in-school factor in improving outcomes for children. Ensuring that teachers are qualified plays an important role in driving up quality. The change in legislation will ensure that children benefit from professionally qualified, well-trained teachers. Therefore, we are confident that the benefit of the policy on outcomes for children in England is balanced against the possible minor negative impacts identified.

Disability: We have also identified a potential positive impact under limbs 2 and 3. As this legislation change will ensure that new teachers entering the classroom have or are working towards QTS from the implementation date, it will mean that teachers must have demonstrated they can meet the Teachers' Standards, including Standard 5, to adapt teaching to the strengths and needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Therefore, there would be a positive impact for pupils with disabilities through more teachers having the skills, training and confidence to support them in the classroom.

Sex: Evidence suggests there is little difference between the proportion of unqualified entrants who are female compared to qualified entrants⁶². Almost half (47%) of all qualified returners to the profession in the 2023 school workforce census were women aged 30-49,⁶³ so we might also expect some unqualified female teachers to have made the decision to take a career break on the belief that they would be able to return to teaching without having QTS. If this were the case, the requirement from the implementation date could be a barrier to some women returning to teaching. To mitigate the negative impacts, we have ensured reasonable time before implementation of the QTS requirement, so that unqualified returners have time to consider their options and plan their route to QTS. We will also produce guidance for unqualified returners, setting out the range of routes to QTS and support available to support them on their journey back to the classroom, including how they can work while they gain QTS through employment-based ITT routes.

Age: Two thirds of unqualified entrants are aged between 30-59, who we assume are more likely to have several years' experience in the classroom.⁶⁴ Despite this, should they want to leave their current employing school or academy trust from the implementation date, they would then be required to have QTS or fall under one of the exemptions set out in regulations alongside all unqualified entrants. There are a range of services available on our 'Get into Teaching' website to support candidates in their teaching journey, including older age groups looking to gain QTS through changing their career later in life. This includes one-to-one support from Teacher Training Advisers, who are experienced former teachers, throughout their application journey.⁶⁵ Those looking to continue working while gaining QTS would find salaried courses most suitable, including the Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship. Additionally, the new Teacher Degree Apprenticeship will allow candidates without a degree to study for an undergraduate degree and gain QTS whilst earning a salary and being employed in a school. Some experienced teachers may be suitable for an Assessment only route where they are assessed against the Teachers' Standards by an accredited ITT provider.

Race: There is a higher proportion of unqualified entrants from a Black ethnic background (11%) than qualified entrants to the workforce from a Black ethnic background (4%).⁶⁶ In the same period, ITT acceptance rates were lower for Black

⁶² Internal analysis of unqualified entrants into academies using [2022 School Workforce Census data](#) (total 2,800 unqualified entrants). Unqualified entrants are defined as those who enter, return to, or move schools to teach in a state funded primary, secondary, or special school or pupil referral unit (PRU) in an academy, who are not already on an ITT route leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the same or the following academic year (identified using ITT census data). However, these numbers include some teachers who will be exempt from the regulations.

⁶³ [School workforce in England, Reporting year 2023 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁶⁴ Internal analysis of unqualified entrants into academies split by age group, using [2022 School Workforce Census data](#) (total 2,800 unqualified entrants). Unqualified entrants are defined as those who enter, return to, or move schools to teach in a state funded primary, secondary, or special school or pupil referral unit (PRU) in an academy, who are not already on an ITT route leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the same or the following academic year (identified using ITT census data). However, these numbers include some teachers who will be exempt from the regulations.

⁶⁵ [Get Into Teaching | Get Into Teaching GOV.UK](#)

⁶⁶ Internal analysis of unqualified entrants into academies using the [2022 School Workforce Census](#), comparing the percentage of unqualified entrants from each ethnic group (total 2,300 unqualified entrants with known ethnicity) with the percentage of

candidates than other ethnic groups however, these figures have not been adjusted for candidate eligibility to ITT training courses with a considerable proportion of candidates being ineligible for various reasons in this period.⁶⁷ We will continue to provide recruitment data to providers to help mitigate this, and we are exploring ways to ensure that all candidates have the best chance of success and how we can improve recruitment practices to support diversity in the teaching workforce. We have also identified a potential **positive** impact. If this measure increases the proportion of teachers from a Black ethnic background amongst qualified entrants, those teachers will have the skills and training they need to enter the classroom confidently at the start of their career. They will also have access to a higher pay scale, access to a supported programme of professional development through statutory induction and better opportunities for career progression. Removing these barriers to progression may increase the proportion of teachers from a Black ethnic minority background in senior leadership positions. In turn, this may benefit pupils who see an increase in representation of teachers from a Black ethnic background in senior leadership positions.

National Curriculum

Policy context

This measure will provide an entitlement for all children to receive a high-quality core education. It will provide assurance and transparency to parents, who will know the details of what their child should be taught, regardless of the school they attend. Equalities impact analysis.

This measure has a neutral impact across all protected characteristics and limbs for the PSED across workforce and pupils. Maintained schools are already legally required to follow the national curriculum, which sets out the subjects and programmes of study which schools are obligated to cover for children of compulsory school age. Currently, academies do not have to teach the national curriculum although they can choose to do so.

Religion or belief: There is a small number of faith schools who may need to consider how to amend their curriculum to ensure they are teaching the national curriculum. Some Jewish academy and maintained schools offer a Kodesh curriculum alongside the secular curriculum. Some Orthodox Jewish academy schools do not teach parts of the national curriculum, where it does not sit within their religious views. We are aware that some Muslim schools have previously raised concerns about the requirement to teach music. However, maintained Jewish and Muslim schools are already required to teach the national curriculum and these schools provide examples of how to manage any challenges. We are considering how to support academies, including faith academies, to

qualified entrants from each ethnic group (total 25,600 qualified entrants with known ethnicity). Unqualified entrants are defined as those who enter, return to, or move schools to teach in a state funded primary, secondary, or special school or pupil referral unit (PRU) in an academy, who are not already on an ITT route leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the same or the following academic year (identified using ITT census data). However, these numbers include some teachers who will be exempt from the regulations.

⁶⁷ [Initial Teacher Training Census \(2024\) Explore education statistics](#)

deliver their curriculum as part of wider implementation planning following the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

Academy schools: educational provision for improving behaviour

Policy context

This measure will provide equivalent statutory powers for academy schools as it currently exists for maintained schools to direct pupils temporarily to an alternative location including mainstream schools and alternative provision (known as off-site direction) to improve their behaviour.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **age (limbs 1-2)**, **disability** (limbs 1-2), **gender reassignment** (limb 1), **pregnancy and maternity** (limb 1) **race** (limbs 1-2), **religion or belief** (limb 1), **sex** (limbs 1-2), and **sexual orientation** (limb 1). By amending section 29A of the Education Act 2002, this will remove any ambiguity around academies' powers for off-site direction and set a consistent standard of acceptable practice for directing pupils off-site between academy schools and maintained schools.

Off-site direction is an important behaviour management intervention used by schools to help improve a pupil's future behaviour. A direction off-site can be viewed as a change in routine for a pupil, and setting into a new environment can be challenging, however with appropriate support, integration can be successful. This alongside a suitable education, pupils are kept safe in school and engaged in their learning, being provided with appropriate support should they need it. Additionally, it will ensure that pupils are treated fairly between academy schools and maintained schools when they are placed off-site to improve their behaviour. This measure supports wider efforts to safeguard pupils and promote educational outcomes, ensuring scrutiny and transparency and guarding against misconduct or malpractice.

This change in legislation is neutral in terms of overall impact, because academy schools can already arrange off-site provision under their general powers, however, all pupils will benefit, especially those with certain characteristics who are more likely to experience early intervention to improve their behaviour. This change will ensure that academies are subject to the same statutory safeguards as maintained schools in their use of off-site direction.

Limited evidence does show that off-site direction can be beneficial for the general cohort of pupils who may experience off-site direction. Some factors such as small class sizes and the supportive, nurturing approach of the AP could have a positive impact on children's attendance and engagement with learning.⁶⁸ From a pupil perspective, research has shown that pupils had positive comments to make about (their) provision, what they were learning, how well they were supported and the impact the provision was

⁶⁸ [Alternative provision in local areas in England: a thematic review \(2024\). GOV.UK](#)

having on their behaviour, attitudes, attendance and outcomes at school.⁶⁹ In contrast, research does also indicate that children find time-limited placements difficult. They lost their friends, had to form new relationships and experienced further change on their return to their home school. This had a significant impact on some children who had already experienced other losses in their lives, particularly children in care. It worked well when the child's mainstream provision remained in close contact, visiting the child weekly, but this was uncommon.⁷⁰ Additionally, wider factors such as staff from schools and APs off-site were 'better placed and qualified than school staff to identify certain needs and to tailor provision to individual pupils'.⁷¹

Groups of children and young people, who are most likely to experience an intervention designed to improve their behaviour, such as off-site direction are outlined below:

Age: Ages 11 to 15 have a higher likelihood of being excluded than those in younger cohorts. Trends for 2022/23 school, show that the highest rate for suspension peaks around pupils at aged 13 (27.37 per 100 pupils); and for permanent exclusion it peaks around pupils aged 14 (0.36 per 100 pupils), before dropping for older pupils. Whilst the Department does not collect an accurate overall picture on the use of off-site direction by either academy schools or maintained schools to improve a pupil's behaviour, data shows the majority of school exclusions occur at secondary school age (with the highest rates of exclusion occurring for pupils in Year 9 and 10).⁷²

Disability: Data shows that the most common reason recorded for schools arranging AP was for an off-site placement for behavioural support with 55.3%⁷³ of placements recorded with this reason. Of all pupils in school arranged AP, 23.9% of pupils had an Educational Health and Care (EHC) plan and a further 42.5% were on SEN support.⁷⁴

Race: Data shows that in AP schools, over 25.8% of pupils are from a minority ethnic background.⁷⁵ Whilst it is not possible to quantify how many of these placements in AP are due to off-site directions to improve behaviour, we do know from longstanding exclusions statistics and the [Timpson Review of School Exclusion \(2019\)](#) that pupils from particular ethnic groups have higher chances of exclusion than their White British peers, although local context means different patterns across the country. Once other factors were controlled for, Black Caribbean, and White & Black Caribbean pupils were more likely to be permanently excluded than White British pupils (1.7x and 1.6x the odds respectively).⁷⁶

Sex: Data from the School Census provides some insight through the use of code B (attending any other approved educational activity) and code D (when a pupil is due to attend another school where they are registered) on the number of pupils entering AP on a school arranged placement. In the 2023/24 school year the most common reason

⁶⁹ [Alternative provision findings from Ofsted's threeyear survey of schools use of off-site alternative provision \(2016\). Ofsted](#)

⁷⁰ [Alternative provision in local areas in England: a thematic review \(2024\)GOV.UK](#)

⁷¹ [Alternative provision for primary-age pupils in England: a long-term 'destination' or a 'temporary solution'? \(2022\) GOV.UK](#)

⁷² [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England. Academic year 2022/23](#)

⁷³ 14,587 pupils were placed in school arranged alternative provision, by type of setting and placement reason in 2023/24.

⁷⁴ As above

⁷⁵ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics \(2024\). Explore education statistics](#)

⁷⁶ [Timpson Review of School Exclusion \(2019\). GOV.UK](#)

recorded for school arranged AP placements was off-site placement for behavioural support (55.3%) and of all pupils in AP arranged by a school, 67.4% of pupils on these placements were male⁷⁷. Comparatively, the proportion of girls in the state-funded AP school population has increased annually from 27.1% 2020/21 to 32.6% in 2023/24.⁷⁸

Due to limited evidence available, the Department will continually review the impact of this change by closely monitoring related school exclusion data publications. This will show any trends or changes in the way that pupils are excluded from school, as it is likely this may also indicate changes in the way pupils are being directed off-site to other settings. Additionally, we will continue to monitor issues and trends arising from wider stakeholders, general correspondence and casework to ensure we get a sense of what is happening on the ground. This will help us monitor this measure effectively and will support any proposed changes to off-site direction policy.

Academy Intervention

Policy context

This section provides the Secretary of State with the power to direct academy trusts that fail to comply with duties contained in their academy arrangements. Academy arrangements require academies to comply with all legal requirements that apply to them. By introducing a power to issue a direction, this section provides a straightforward and direct method to ensure legal compliance, consistent with the current arrangements for maintained schools. Additionally, this section supports the proportionate enforcement of key provisions introduced in this Act.

Equalities impact analysis

Generally, this section is expected to have a positive impact across academy trusts, as it enables enforcement of legal requirements that improve equality outcomes. However, we have assessed a neutral impact across each of the protected characteristics of the PSED. The precise impact this power will have on those with these characteristics will differ depending on each specific instance when the power is used, when we know what legal requirement is being enforced, how it is being enforced and the circumstances in which it is being enforced.

Academy Orders

Policy context

The Act converts the duty to issue academy orders to maintained schools in a category causing concern to a discretionary power. This change allows the government to take an active choice about whether the school needs a change in leadership or support.

RISE teams will act as a core improvement offer within the system that will provide targeted, expert support to schools, drawing on experienced leaders and practitioners to

⁷⁷[Schools, pupils and their characteristics \(2024\). Explore education statistics](#)

⁷⁸ As above

strengthen leadership, build capability, and embed evidence-based practice. This supports a system where improvement is driven through collaboration, capacity-building and the spread of effective practice.

This approach enables earlier and more proportionate intervention, allowing schools to improve through targeted support where they have the capacity to do so, while also building sustained improvement capability across the system.

This flexibility means that where schools, particularly those requiring significant improvement, have the capacity and foundations to improve, we can prioritise targeted intervention and support rather than defaulting immediately to structural change.

At the same time, for the most underperforming schools, particularly those requiring special measures and lacking the capacity to improve, academisation will remain a vital and decisive intervention, ensuring more radical transformation where it is needed most.

Overall, this reform enables a system that is more proportionate and effective, combining high expectations with the right support, and ensuring that every school is on the strongest possible path to improvement.

Equalities impact analysis

This section has a positive/neutral impact across all protected characteristics and limbs for the PSED, meaning that it has at least a neutral impact and in some areas, there is a positive impact. This section will impact all children in schools in scope. Children with disabilities and children eligible for free school meals will be more likely to be impacted due to their increased prevalence in the schools currently eligible for intervention under this section. Children of secondary age are also more likely to be impacted. However, as we expect the impact of this section to be positive on the schools eligible for intervention under this section, allowing the Secretary of State to take more targeted intervention action to drive targeted school improvement, we believe this intervention/change is justified.

Teacher Pay and Conditions

Policy context

This measure will create a power to set a minimum level of teacher's pay for all state schools. Subsequently, through secondary legislation, the STPCD will remove any ceiling on pay for maintained schools as is the case for academies, enabling healthy competition and innovation beyond a core framework. We will require academy schools and alternative provision academies, for the first time, to have regard to the STPCD, ensuring an established starting point for all schools. Maintained schools will continue to follow the entire STPCD and will see the benefit of further flexibilities in the STPCD after the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is remitted to consider this following Royal Assent. This will mean all school teachers in state schools can expect a core pay offer and all schools will have flexibility to innovate to attract the best teachers for our children.

Equalities impact analysis

We have identified a positive impact under limb 1 of the PSED for the following protected characteristics: age, ethnicity, sex and religion. Proportionately academies have a more ethnically diverse workforce, have more younger teachers, more male teachers, and more teachers identifying as having no religion. The requirement for academy schools and alternative provision academies to follow the minimum level of pay set out in secondary legislation will positively impact these groups because it will provide these teachers with a core offer which all schools will need to comply with. To be clear, this isn't a limit on teacher pay as changes to the STPCD will ultimately benefit all teachers as there will no longer be a maximum pay band in the STPCD. Furthermore, for the first time, there will be a requirement for academy schools and alternative provision academies to have regard to the rest of the STPCD, so they only diverge where they have good reason not to follow the STPCD, providing further protection for these groups (and all teachers).

For teachers in maintained schools, we anticipate that they will benefit from changes made to the STPCD through secondary legislation after Royal Assent. However, we need to go through the statutory pay review process to determine and implement any changes to the STPCD, which means we cannot definitively outline, at this time, what the statutory framework will look like until after this process has taken place.

Since PSED is a continuing obligation, we will continue to monitor and assess the potential impacts of this measure on all 9 protected characteristics. When remitting the STRB for their recommendation each year, the Secretary of State asks the STRB to have regard to a number of factors, including potential equalities impacts associated with any proposed changes to the STPCD. Therefore, the STRB will consider the impact of any changes to teachers' pay and conditions on all teachers in scope each year, including when we remit them to consider changes as part of this measure.

School Admissions: Duties to co-operate regarding admissions and place planning

Policy context

This measure plans to introduce new duties for mainstream state schools and local authorities to co-operate regarding their respective admissions functions and for mainstream, special and alternative provision state schools to co-operate with local authorities regarding their place planning functions. The new duties would provide a 'backstop' for addressing serious failures to co-operate. Additionally, where co-operation fails or breaks down, the Secretary of State will be able to intervene and seek to ensure that admissions and place planning functions can be fulfilled.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact under the protected characteristics of **disability** (limbs 1-2), **race** (limbs 1-2), **religion or belief** (limb 3), and **sex** (limb 2). It is anticipated this measure will improve co-operation in areas where there can be a lack of co-

operation and consideration of the wider community's needs, for example, in-year admissions and the Fair Access Protocol. Lack of co-operation in these areas particularly affects vulnerable and disadvantaged children as well as children of particular races (black, Asian and other minorities e.g. Gypsy/Roma) and children with **disabilities**. These groups may benefit from this policy due to the increased effectiveness in working practices between schools and local authorities.

School Admissions: Local authority direction powers

Policy context

To ensure that local authorities have the necessary levers to fulfil their statutory duties, we propose giving local authorities powers to direct both maintained schools and academies to admit a child. This will act as a safety net and ensure that unplaced and vulnerable children can secure a new school place quickly.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics of **disability** (limbs 1-3), **pregnancy and maternity** (limbs 1-2), **race** (limbs 2-3), **religion or belief** (limb 2), and **sex** (limb 2).

Disability: The changes will have a positive impact and help eliminate any indirect discrimination that may occur for children who have some form of disability but who do not have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.⁷⁹ Evidence suggests that it is often difficult for these children to secure places, especially in-year.⁸⁰ Improvements to the safety net for ensuring that school places are found for vulnerable children in-year is likely to have a greater positive impact on children with disabilities. This measure will potentially have the effect of making it easier for such children to mix and socialise and foster good relationships with others of their own age group, who do not necessarily have any form of disability. Strengthened local authority direction powers are likely to act as an incentive for schools to work together with local authorities to secure school places for children who need them. As such, it could result in children with SEN (including those with disabilities) securing school places more quickly via the usual processes (in-year and Fair Access Protocols) without a need for a direction.

Pregnancy and maternity: Research has shown that in the UK, many young women are not in school during and after pregnancy for a range of reasons, including discriminatory and stigmatising attitudes. Furthermore, teenage mothers are also less likely to finish their education.⁸¹ Improving the framework to find places for children when they are struggling to find one in-year, including the proposed direction power, will make it easier for local authorities to secure places for children whose circumstances mean they are vulnerable, such as some young people who are pregnant or new parents. In addition, the greater transparency involved in the new process will make it more difficult for admission authorities to refuse places where there is no good reason – e.g.

⁷⁹ The process for placing a child with an EHC plan is different.

⁸⁰ ISOS Report 'Research into the role of local authorities in local education systems' 2021: 96% of LAs reported resistance from some schools to admit or retain pupils with additional needs.

⁸¹ [Early pregnancy and education in the UK \(2020\) UNESCO](#)

discriminatory attitudes. The ISOS Report '*Research into the role of local authorities in local education systems*' ' March 2022 reported that 94% of local authorities reported resistance from some schools to admit or retain pupils with complex and additional needs.

Race: These changes will likely have a positive impact on those children who fall under the protected characteristic of race. Based on information from local authorities, factors which have been identified as creating an increased pressure on the in-year admissions system includes the rise in immigration.⁸² This suggests that migrant children, who are more likely than non-migrant children to be non-UK nationals, may face greater difficulties in securing a school place in-year, as schools tend to be full by that point.

These children may also have a different religion or belief (e.g., Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh etc.), impacting the protected characteristic of **religion or belief**.⁸³ The changes are also likely to benefit those children who fall under the protected characteristic of race that have comparatively high rates of expulsion – namely those of Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller heritage ethnicity groups and children from certain black groups (e.g. mixed white and black Caribbean, black Caribbean, black African) and those that are over-represented in the Youth Justice System (black children being significantly over-represented in this group, along with mixed ethnicity and Asian and other ethnic groups).⁸⁴ ⁸⁵ Such children are more likely to struggle to secure school places in-year, as schools are able to refuse admission if they have good reasons to believe a child is likely to demonstrate challenging behaviour, and more likely to benefit from strengthened local authority direction powers to secure a school place quickly.

Sex: Boys are more likely to be suspended and permanently excluded at all ages than girls and are more likely to benefit from a strengthened safety net and direction power for placing children in school.⁸⁶

⁸² According to the [Long-term international migration, provisional - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/migration/long-term-international-migration-provisional) preliminary analysis indicates that workers (non-EU work-related immigrants) most likely to bring dependents came from Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Ghana. Dependents means a mixture of adults and children; and of the top ten countries, around 50% of dependents were aged 17 or under. In addition to this, a report from the Home Office provides data on asylum seekers [SN01403.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/document/long-term-international-migration-provisional). In 2023, 41% were nationals of Asian countries, with the largest individual Asian nationalities being Afghan, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Vietnamese. The next largest regional groupings of nationalities were African (21%), Middle Eastern (19%) and European (13%). Around 6% of main applicants were from countries in the Americas, Oceania, and other parts of the world. The largest individual nationalities among those who applied in 2023 were Afghan (7,800), Iranian (6,200), Indian (4,800), Pakistani (4,300), and Bangladeshi (3,900).

⁸³ ONS: [Migrant indicator and religion](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/migration/migrant-indicator-and-religion) from the Census 2021 shows that 40.2% of the international migrant population (all nationalities) in England and Wales were Christian, 13.6% were Muslim, 6.6% were Hindu, 1.4% were Buddhist, 1.2% were Sikh and 0.6% were Jewish. Compared to the overall population in England and Wales, 46.2% are Christian, 6.4% are Muslim, 1.7% are Hindu, 0.4% are Buddhist, 0.9% are Sikh, and 0.5% are Jewish.

⁸⁴ Gypsy and Roma, and Traveller of Irish heritage pupils have the highest permanent exclusion rates, with 31 exclusions per 10,000 pupils (0.31%) in the 2021 to 2022 school year. Source: [Permanent exclusions - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/ethnicity-facts-figures)

⁸⁵ [Racial disproportionality](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/racial-disproportionality) (2020) GOV.UK

⁸⁶ Males have over 1.5 times the rate of suspension than females – 11.66 compared to 6.91; and more than twice the rate of permanent exclusions, 0.15 compared to 0.07 for females. Source: [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Academic year 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

School Admissions: Functions of the Adjudicator in relation to admission numbers

Policy context

This measure aims to improve collaboration between admission authorities and local authorities on published admission numbers (PANs), to help local authorities to deliver their sufficiency duty and manage the school estate effectively, and deliver a choice of high quality local school places for parents. It will give the independent Schools Adjudicator powers to decide the PAN of an individual school, where they uphold an objection to that school's PAN, with school quality and parental preference as central considerations, to help ensure all children in a local area are able to attend a high performing school.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure is assessed to have a neutral impact across most protected characteristics in the PSED across all limbs, with a positive impact on **disability** under limbs 2 and 3. These proposals will help to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share the relevant protected characteristic of disability and persons who do not share it, by enabling clear-cut, independent resolutions to cases where there is dispute about the number of places offered by a school. This is likely to promote more effective and holistic decision making on matters relating to local place planning, based on the local community's needs, and with the quality of provision and parental preference as central considerations. This could result in capacity at high performing schools being made available in areas where there are currently insufficient places, which would make local and high quality places more accessible for children with a disability in those areas.

Establishment of new schools

Policy context

This measure will repeal the current requirement for local authorities to first invite academy proposals where a need for a new school has been identified and allow voluntary and foundation schools to be put forward as well. Local authorities will also be able to put forward their own proposals. Where local authorities have chosen not to publish their own proposals, they will be the decision maker. Where local authorities have put forward their own proposals the Secretary of State will be the decision maker.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure has a neutral impact across all protected characteristics and limbs for the PSED. Local authorities are under a duty to ensure sufficient places are available for all children. As part of the planning process for new schools, local authorities will undertake assessments of the impact of the desired new school, both in terms of the impact on particular groups of pupils (and others) from an equalities perspective, and on existing educational institutions locally.

Decision makers in the new framework will, as now, be required have regard to the PSED when considering proposals, and the impact of any new school on protected characteristics. This includes sex, where a proposal for a single sex school would require

consideration of whether there is equal access to single sex provision for the other sex. Decision makers will also take account of the community to be served by the school and the views of different sections within the community and should be satisfied that the proposer has done the same. The decision maker should be satisfied that the proposer has considered the importance of promoting local integration and community cohesion.

Free School Meals

Policy context

This measure creates a new category of free school meals (FSM) known as 'Expanded FSM' which would apply to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, Universal Credit and have a household income of more than £7,400. Maintained schools, academies and non-maintained special schools would be under a duty to provide free school meals on request to these eligible pupils.

A pupil is eligible to receive a free school meal when a claim for the meal has been made by them or on their behalf and their eligibility, or protected status, has been verified by the school where they are enrolled or by the local authority.

From September 2026 the Department for Education (DfE) will be introducing new eligibility criteria meaning that all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) in England and attending state funded schools will be entitled to receive a free school meal. This includes school-aged children as well as those in further education settings.

Alongside the introduction of this new FSM threshold, transitional protections for free school meals will also end. Eligibility will be determined by the new eligibility criteria regardless of whether pupils previously received a free meal as part of the transitional protections policy. Transitional protections have been in place since 2018 and were designed to ensure that no child who had FSM eligibility would lose it while Universal Credit was rolled out. No pupil with transitional protections will lose their entitlement to free meals before the new entitlement is introduced in September 2026.

Equalities impact analysis

This measure will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of **age** (limbs 2 and 3), **disability** (limbs 1, 2 and 3), **race** (limbs 1, 2 and 3), **religion or belief** (limb 1), and **sex** (limbs 1, 2 and 3).

Age: Over 500,000 children⁸⁷ are expected to take up free school meals as a result of this policy, providing a positive benefit to the recipients of child-age who may experience food insecurity or poor nutrition lunch without the intervention. Registered pupils of state-funded schools in reception through to year 2 will not be immediately impacted by this decision owing to the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) policy which ensures that such pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are able to claim a free and nutritious lunch,

⁸⁷ [Estimate of additional children claiming Free School Meals following expansion of eligibility, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

regardless of household income. This will not change as a result of the introduction of this policy.

It is not known if any year groups of pupils will disproportionately benefit from this extension. Parents of pupils now eligible for free school meals will also benefit from this policy with the value of eligibility for free school meals of £500 per year per child. Universal credit is available only to working age households so adults benefitting from this policy change will be within these age bands, with some concentration towards younger aged working age households as the average age of mothers at the age of their first birth over recent decades is around 28 to 31.

Disability: The Department does not collect data on disabled pupils. This analysis relies on information about Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and receipt of SEN support as best available proxies for disability. The latest school census data from 2024/25 shows that 43.8% of pupils with an EHCP and 39.3% with SEN support were registered to receive FSM. This compares to 22.2% of pupils in schools without SEN.⁸⁸ This highlights that pupils with an EHCP or SEN support are currently more likely to be eligible for FSM and could therefore be positively impacted. It is not known if pupils who will become eligible for the FSM are disproportionately likely to be SEN designated or to have an EHCP.

A condition of eligibility for free meals is being a registered pupil of a state-funded school. Local authorities retain their ability to exercise their discretion in covering food related costs for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of a child's EHCP provision at an independent special school named in the EHCP.

This expansion may also benefit parents. One way a household can be eligible for Universal Credit is through being unable to work due to a health condition. This suggests that households with disabled persons may be particularly likely to benefit from an extension to FSM eligibility with the value of eligibility for free school meals of £500 per year per child.

Universal Credit claimants are more likely to be disabled than the wider population as a whole.⁸⁹ Children benefitting from the FSM expansion might be from a family which is disproportionately likely to contain a disabled adult, and we know that having a disabled child can limit a parent's labour market engagement, resulting in an increased likelihood of claiming Universal Credit and thus benefitting from expanded eligibility for FSM.

Race: School census data illustrates that some ethnic groups are disproportionately represented in the current FSM cohort and may be more likely to be positively affected by a policy which increases eligibility for FSM.⁹⁰ There is no analysis of the effect of the FSM expansion by ethnicity. Among the school population as a whole, 38% of pupils are from an ethnic minority population which is higher than the whole population of England.⁹¹ This indicates that ethnic minority children and households are more likely to benefit from an extension to eligibility for free school meals. Within the Universal Credit caseload and where data is available (75.5% of claimants), 76.5% of the caseload identified as White.

⁸⁸ [Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁸⁹ [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

⁹⁰ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁹¹ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

This is below the 81.7% of the population of England and Wales which identified as White in the 2021 census.⁹² This indicates that ethnic minority households may disproportionately benefit from an expansion of free school meals to all households on Universal Credit.

Religion or belief: We expect a positive impact because of the breadth of the policy's reach, which we estimate impacts around 3 million children across all state-funded Schools in England, including settings with a religious character or ethos.⁹³ Owing to the number and variety of state-funded schools with a religious character benefitting from FSM, we consider that this policy has positive or neutral impacts against all three PSED limbs with respect to religion.

Pupils attending independent religious schools do not receive free school meals as the FSM entitlement is linked to being a registered pupil of a state-funded school. There are structural differences between the state-funded and independent education sectors that result in the latter enjoying greater autonomy at the expense of generally not receiving state-funding. Conditioning FSM eligibility on being a registered pupil of a state-funded school balances the realisation of the benefits of this policy to support the health and attainment of the most disadvantaged pupils, against its significant costs and administrative complexity, which is greater for independent settings. We note that all children of compulsory school age are entitled to a state-funded school place if they need one.

We also consider that alternative forms of support exist that are not linked to the setting in which children are educated. This includes broader welfare provision through the Universal Credit system, and access to the Household Support Fund. Whilst those are not completely analogous to FSM, they may serve to promote similar benefits to that policy.

Sex: Women made up 58% of the people on Universal Credit in July 2025. This indicates women may be more likely to benefit from the policy which extends eligibility for free school meals to households on Universal Credit.⁹⁴ A significant part of the Universal Credit caseload is lone parent households (~2.1 million lone parent households in May 2025, compared to ~800,000 couples with children).⁹⁵ The vast majority of these households are headed by women. It is likely that a greater number of lone parent households headed by women will come into scope of, and benefit from, the new policy than differently composed households, although others will already have been eligible through existing criteria.

When considering the factor of place, in 2024/25, the highest FSM eligibility rates were seen in the North East where 32.3% of pupils were eligible for FSM, and the West Midlands where 30.9% of pupils were eligible for FSM. By contrast, 20.6% of pupils were eligible for FSM in the South East and 20.7% of pupils eligible in the East of England.⁹⁶ This compares to a national eligibility rate of 25.7%. Using FSM eligibility as a proxy for levels of economic disadvantage, this illustrates that pupils in particular areas of the country, such as the North

⁹² [Universal Credit statistics, 29 April 2013 to 10 July 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁹³ [Estimate of additional children claiming Free School Meals following expansion of eligibility, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁹⁴ [Universal Credit statistics, 29 April 2013 to 10 July 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁹⁵ [Universal Credit statistics, 29 April 2013 to 10 July 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

⁹⁶ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

East and the West Midlands, might be positively affected by introducing a policy that increases the eligibility criteria for FSM.

Benefits-based FSM is targeted at households in receipt of benefits who are on a low-income. Any measures which are targeted at ensuring that those who are eligible for FSM are receiving it would be positive for those disadvantaged pupils who are currently missing out. This policy will lift 100,000 children out of poverty.⁹⁷ This is because free school meals count as income-in-kind for Households Below Average Income (HBAI). Therefore, an increase in the number of children eligible for FSM impacts on the number of children classed as being in low-income. This figure is indicative of the number of children who are close to the poverty line and so will be brought out of poverty through the savings associated with this expansion. For children in larger families, savings will be higher.

We estimate that over 500,000 additional children will benefit from expanding the criteria for free school meals eligibility.⁹⁸ This shows that this policy is going to have a positive impact on those from the most disadvantaged groups.

Academy Trust Inspection and Intervention

Policy context

Currently, statutory inspection and intervention powers only apply to individual schools and academies, leaving no statutory framework for oversight at academy trust level. The legislation introduces trust-level inspection and intervention to strengthen accountability at trust-level and enable targeted action based on independent Ofsted reports.

The legislation delivers on the Government manifesto commitment to bring multi-academy trusts (MATs) into the inspection system. It will also support a self-improving system by facilitating the sharing of best practice across the sector. It will help trusts focus their improvement efforts by identifying weaker areas, as well as areas of strength where they may be able to support others. The best trusts collaborate meaningfully in school improvement initiatives like RISE, and on issues such as SEND, and inspection will recognise trusts that take this wider system role. We envisage that it will consider how effectively trusts are working with local partners, including local authorities, to support positive outcomes for all children in their area.

In parallel, the legislation introduces new trust-level intervention powers, so that, where a trust is identified as underperforming, intervention may include terminating any of an academy trust's funding agreements and moving some or all of the trust's academies into stronger trusts. We will also consider whether, with intervention, the existing trust could improve. Together, these measures will ensure action can be targeted at the right level, whether that is the trust or individual academies.

⁹⁷ [Free School Meals expansion to all children on Universal Credit – Impact on individual and child poverty levels and number of children in households receiving Universal Credit - GOV.UK](#)

⁹⁸ [Estimate of additional children claiming Free School Meals following expansion of eligibility, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

Equality Impact Analysis

This measure is assessed to have a positive impact for pupils and students, and trust employees, in relation to disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex and sexual orientation, under limb 2. We do not envisage any negative impacts on parents, or those employed by Ofsted in relation to all protected characteristics.

Disability: Overall, we expect a positive impact in relation to disability. This is because we anticipate a positive impact in relation to pupils and students with SEND, and at least a neutral impact in relation to other disabilities. We expect the trust inspection system will include considering a trust's approach to inclusion, how effectively it supports pupils and students with SEND and how it works with other key partners in this area such as local authorities and the NHS. We therefore expect trust inspection to incentivise trusts to do more in these areas, and where they are not doing well, for issues to be identified and addressed. There may be some disruption to pupils' and students' education, including those with SEND, in the event that the Department intervenes by transferring academies from an underperforming trust to a high-quality trust or trusts. Given that the impact of the intervention measures will be to improve educational standards, the overall impact on pupils is still considered to be positive.

Children with SEND are currently over-represented among pupils that are suspended or permanently excluded.⁹⁹ As inspection will include a focus on inclusion, we anticipate that there is likely to be a positive impact on pupils and students with characteristics which currently make them more likely to be excluded from school, whether this exclusion is formal or informal.

We expect trust inspection to include consideration of how well trusts support their staff and the wider workforce, which may identify any issues with equality and diversity. Inspection will also consider the effectiveness of the trusts approach to recruiting and retaining staff. We therefore expect this additional attention to have a positive impact on employees who have disabilities. We anticipate that this package will, overall, have a positive impact for disability, primarily in relation to limb 2, with some potential to also have an impact on limbs 1 and 3 in some cases.

Gender reassignment: We envisage that inspections will consider a trust's approach to inclusion and how it supports the recruitment, retention and development of the wider schools' workforce. We expect trust inspection to consider how well trusts support their staff and the wider workforce, and may identify any issues with equality and diversity. Inspection will also consider the effectiveness of the trusts' approach to recruiting and retaining staff. We therefore expect this additional attention to have a positive impact in relation to gender reassignment on teaching staff, support staff and those employed by the central trust.

⁹⁹ In the 2024/25 autumn term, the rate of suspensions for pupils with an EHC plan and those with SEN support was 10.31 and 11.09 respectively; this compares with 2.46 for pupils with no identified SEN. The rate of permanent exclusions for pupils with an EHC plan and those with SEN support was 0.11 and 0.14 respectively, compared with 0.02 for pupils with no identified SEN. Source: [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Autumn term 2024/25 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK](#).

Pregnancy and maternity: With respect to the workforce, we anticipate that the new scrutiny of trusts' employment practices will bring about improvements in practice. This may encourage trusts to adopt employment practices that support parents to continue in the profession alongside their childcare responsibilities, for example through providing opportunities to work flexibly such as on a part-time basis. We would also expect to see improvement in provision and outcomes for pupils and students given the focus on inclusion for all children and young persons including students in 16-19 academies and collaboration with local partners such as relevant health services. We therefore expect a positive impact primarily in limb 2 and to some extent in limb 1 in relation to pregnancy and maternity across pupils, teaching staff, support staff and those working in central trust roles.

Race: We expect the enhanced scrutiny of trust inspection and the emphasis on inclusion to encourage trusts to identify and work to address any outcome disparities between different groups of pupils and students, including any which may exist between students of different ethnic backgrounds. Statistics on school exclusions show that some pupils and students from certain ethnic groups have a higher rate of suspension and permanent exclusion than others.¹⁰⁰ In relation to suspension and permanent exclusion, this is particularly the case for gypsy/Roma, travellers of Irish heritage, white and black Caribbean, and Caribbean pupils and students.¹⁰¹ We expect trust inspection to consider how well trusts support their staff and the wider workforce. Inspection will also consider the effectiveness of the trusts approach to recruiting and retaining staff. We therefore expect this to have a positive impact on teaching staff, support staff and those employed by the central trust.

Sex: We expect as a minimum an overall neutral impact in relation to sex on pupils and students, with a more positive impact specifically on males. Males are significantly more likely to be excluded than females.¹⁰² Trust inspection will consider a trusts approach to inclusion and we expect that this will lead to more inclusive practices, leading to fewer preventable suspensions and permanent exclusions, which are associated with poorer outcomes. Given that males are overrepresented in those that are excluded, we expect trust inspection to have a positive impact on this inequality. We expect trust inspection to consider how well trusts support their staff and the wider workforce. Inspection will also consider the effectiveness of the trusts approach to recruiting and retaining staff. We therefore expect this to have a positive impact on teaching staff, support staff and those employed by the central trust. Our overall assessment is that this policy will have a positive impact primarily in limb 2 and to some extent in some cases in limbs 1 and 3 in relation to sex in persons affected.

¹⁰⁰ Source: [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Autumn term 2024/25 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰¹ In the 2024/25 autumn term, the rate of suspension and permanent exclusion for pupils from these groups was 15.16 and 0.20 respectively (gypsy/Roma), 11.75 and 0.18 (travellers of Irish heritage), 7.21 and 0.10 (white and black Caribbean) and 5.10 and 0.10 (Caribbean); as compared with an overall rate of 4.02 and 0.04 across all pupils. Source: [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Autumn term 2024/25 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰² In the 2024/25 autumn term, the rate of suspensions and permanent exclusions for male pupils was 5.01 and 0.06 respectively; this compares with 2.99 and 0.03 respectively for female pupils. Source: [Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Autumn term 2024/25 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK](#)

Sexual orientation: We expect the focus on inclusion and improving provision and outcomes for all children and young persons in their area to have a positive impact on pupils and students on the basis of sexual orientation. Regarding the workforce, any impact is likely to be positive, given the trust's approach to promoting equality and diversity within its workforce will be taken into consideration.

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