



Department
for Education

Introducing national standards for independent and semi-independent provision for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17

Government consultation response

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Secretary of State foreword

Since becoming the Education Secretary earlier this year, I have been clear that every child in this country deserves a stable loving home which keeps them safe, meets their needs and enables them to access a high-quality education, a job or training. All children must be given the opportunity to succeed and achieve their maximum potential in life. This is equally important for those children who are unable to stay with their families and for whom the state takes on responsibility for their care and wellbeing.

Having served as the Minister for Children and Families, I know first-hand that where children and young people live while in care, and the support that they receive, is critical to our success in giving looked after children and care leavers the best possible start in life. These children and young people have often already had difficult and sometimes traumatic experiences and we must strive to do all that we can to make sure that we not only improve their lives but give them the tools they need to unleash their brilliance.

Where this concerns care provision, this means making sure we have a care system which offers a range of care and support options that not only reflect the varying and diverse needs of our children, but also flexes as children get older and their needs change. We continue to need dedicated foster carers and excellent children's homes, but now, more than ever it is clear that we must also have high quality semi-independent homes, which offer the right level of support to help older children prepare for their first steps into adulthood, when they are ready for it.

The use of semi-independent homes has continued to grow as more older children enter the care system. These types of settings can be the right choice for 16- and 17-year-olds. They can offer a place to live with more independence and when combined with the right level of high-quality support, they enable the young people placed there to develop the skills they need to succeed in life.

As the role of these settings in the care system has grown in significance, so must our attention to examining this provision more closely. We must ensure that it is used appropriately and provides the right level of support and safety for looked after children and care leavers. We have already taken steps to ensure that placement practice is appropriate in these settings by banning the placement of children under the age of 16. Children of this age are too young for provision that is intended to provide semi-independent living and they should instead be placed in a children's home or with a foster carer. We must now move forward with steps to ensure that this type of provision delivers the very best for 16- and 17-year-olds who are ready for it.

We will be moving forward with the introduction of mandatory national standards which will be overseen by an Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime. Ofsted will register at provider-level and visit a representative sample of the settings providers operate. I believe that this model will provide the right level of checks and balances in the system,

balancing the need for robust oversight, with the need to ensure the provider market can remain flexible to meeting the demands of young people. We will not be light touch in how we regulate providers – I am absolutely clear that Ofsted will be given the tools needed to take action against any low quality, rogue or unscrupulous actors that are found to be operating. Poor quality provision must and will be stamped out. We will only ever accept good providers who offer accommodation and support at the required standard, and I am confident that Ofsted, with all of their expertise in regulating children's social care, are the best possible organisation to undertake this task.

Ofsted will begin registering providers from April 2023 ahead of the new national standards becoming mandatory for all providers from Autumn 2023 – at which point all providers will need to be registered – and the first full inspections are expected to begin from April 2024.

Our response to this consultation builds upon the Department's work to raise standards and level up opportunities across children's social care. Through the £259 million announced by the Chancellor at the Spending Review in October 2021, we will maintain capacity and expand provision in secure and open residential children's homes. This will ensure that all children in the care system receive the care and accommodation they need.

In addition to this, the Government will invest over £142million across the next three years to support local authorities, providers and Ofsted to deliver our reforms to unregulated provision. This will ensure that young people in this provision are given the opportunity to succeed, and flourish as they move towards independence.

I know that the implementation of these reforms will not be without its challenges. However, it is clear to me from the consultation that the sector is eager and willing to work with us to implement a system that works for everyone, and truly delivers for young people. I am committed to working collaboratively with the sector to ensure that we seize this exciting opportunity to implement a system which not only guarantees high-quality accommodation for young people, but which also ensures that providers are able to tailor and adapt the support provided to each young person.

These reforms represent the beginning of a new chapter for semi-independent homes for older children, which I truly believe will raise the bar for the young people placed there, and alongside the independent review of children's social care will work towards levelling up outcomes across the country for those most in need.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the 45 care-experienced young people and the 219 individuals and organisations who took the time to respond to this consultation. I would also like to thank the 32 young people who participated in the focus groups. Your comments and views have been highly valuable, and I look forward to continuing to work with you all as we deliver these vital reforms.

As the Education Secretary I will do everything I can to improve the lives of our children and young people in the care system.

Background and introduction to the Government's response to the consultation

In 2020, the Government consulted on a series of proposed reforms to [unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers](#), which set out proposals to address concerns that independent and semi-independent unregulated provision for looked after children and care leavers is not always good enough and is not always used appropriately. The vast majority of responses to that consultation were supportive of implementing all of our proposed reforms with widespread support for our key proposals.

The vast majority of responses to our 2020 consultation were in support of the introduction of national standards. They also supported providers being registered and inspected by Ofsted and a ban on the placement of u16s in this provision. Feedback from children and young people who have experienced placements in independent and semi-independent settings demonstrated that, whilst there are positive experiences, issues with suitability and quality of placements are all too common. When they are high quality these placements form a vital part of the care system in meeting the needs of older children, who are ready to live with the increased level of independence that these settings can afford and can absolutely be the right option for some young people.

However, the 2020 consultation reaffirmed our view that reform is much needed in this area.

Firstly, these settings are simply not appropriate for the vast majority of children and young people – where children and young people have complex needs that require care and higher levels of support, they should always be placed in foster care or children's homes where these needs can be met and they can be kept safe. This includes any child under the age of 16. No child of this age should be placed in a setting that is intended to facilitate semi-independent living – children of this age are too young for this and this practice places them at risk. This will also be the case for most 16- and 17-year-olds – most already are placed in children's homes or foster care and we expect this to continue in future.

Secondly, even where independent and semi-independent settings are providing for 16- and 17-year-old children in care and care leavers, they too frequently are not good enough. We have seen too many examples of settings that are not providing enough support, are not meeting the needs of young people, and are not keeping them safe. It is simply unacceptable for any child or young person to be placed in a setting that does not do this for any amount of time. The consultation gave us a clear verdict – national standards overseen by an Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime is required for this provision.

Following the 2020 consultation, we published the [Government's response in February 2021](#). This set out that we would:

- Ban the placement of under-16s in unregulated provision – this ban came into effect in September 2021.
- **Consult on introducing national standards and Ofsted-led registration and inspection** for providers of unregulated provision – we published this consultation in May 2021 and this document sets out the Government’s response.
- **Legislate to give Ofsted additional powers** to take action against illegal unregistered children’s homes.

Following this, in May 2021 we issued a further public consultation seeking views on introducing national standards for unregulated provision to support us in the development of national standards and options for Ofsted-led registration and inspection. The consultation sought views on:

- The key indicators for determining whether a provider offers ‘care’ or ‘support’ to inform the development of guidance;
- How best to define this provision in future;
- What the best provision in this sector looks like;
- A proposed suite of standards (including their impact and associated costs); and
- How settings should be regulated by Ofsted.

Alongside the main public consultation, we were keen to hear directly from care-experienced children and young people to ensure the views of those who the system seeks to benefit most were collected. We therefore issued a [version of the consultation aimed directly at care-experienced children and young people](#), as well as commissioning Kantar Public to run a series of focus group discussions on the consultation proposals.

The consultations and focus groups have provided strong backing for proceeding with the proposed national standards and a provider-level Ofsted registration and inspection regime and we will work closely with the sector to implement these reforms over the coming months and years.

This document provides a high-level summary of the findings of the consultation and sets out the government’s response and planned next steps.

Summary of responses received and the government's response

The online consultations were hosted on gov.uk and ran from 24 May 2021 until 19 July 2021. The Department received a total of 268 responses. 219 responses came from the main public consultation, and a further 45 responses from the version aimed at care experienced children and young people. We commissioned a comprehensive analysis of these responses and the report of this has been [published alongside this government response](#).

Alongside the consultations, we commissioned independent qualitative research by Kantar Public, with care experienced young people aged 16 and over to seek their views on the consultation proposals. Researchers supported partner organisations including local authorities, providers of independent and semi-independent settings, and charities to invite young people to participate. A total of 32 care experienced young people took part across 11 focus groups. All sessions were carried out remotely and participation was anonymised. To conclude the research, care experienced young people were also invited to comment on the findings from both online sessions and the care experienced children and young people version of the consultation in an online community platform.

[A full research report](#) of this work has been published alongside this government response.

Evidence from both the central consultation, and the extended work with young people, has been considered in parallel to inform the Government's response and next steps.

The consultation and focus groups gave us a clear mandate for the introduction of the proposed national standards, and for pursuing Ofsted-led registration and inspection at provider-level. It also gave us a rich bank of intelligence on the types of provision that exist under the broad umbrella term of 'unregulated placements' and the range of accommodation and support services they offer that will all be in scope of the new regime.

- Almost all of the indicators of 'care' or 'support' that we consulted on were supported by the majority of respondents as being helpful or very helpful in distinguishing whether a provider offers 'care' or 'support', and just over fifty percent of children and young people thought they were fit for purpose. Respondents did highlight the need for further qualification of the indicators in supporting guidance particularly around supporting young people with budgeting, healthcare and in addressing safeguarding issues. Young people in the focus groups were asked more broadly to share their understanding of the terms 'care' and 'support'. 'Care' was generally described as an emotional response to an individuals' needs in the moment. Participants understanding of 'support' was

characterised as practical help and guidance and should be bespoke to the young person, supporting them to prepare to live more independently post 18-years-old.

- Respondents to the main consultation were fairly evenly split on whether they agreed to calling all unregulated provision ‘supported accommodation for older children’ or not, with forty percent being in agreement with the description, thirty-nine percent stating they did not agree with the terminology and with twenty-one percent unsure. However, of those that responded ‘no’, thirty-seven percent of respondents mainly took issue with the term ‘older children’ when referring to this type of provision, and instead suggested alternatives that they felt would be more inclusive and appropriate for the intended cohort – particularly ‘young people’ which many thought was a term already widely used. This was similar to the findings of our work with care-experienced children and young people where most agreed with the proposed terminology.
- When asked to tell us about the range of accommodation and support provided or commissioned within this sector, we received an incredibly broad range of responses which demonstrated the diversity of provision, from shared housing with 24-hour live-in support, to supported lodgings where young people live with a family. The findings have given us a rich source of intelligence for consideration of how reforms could interact with different types of provision. In the focus groups, young people said the support received in this type of accommodation should be based on what each person needs rather than everyone getting the same support.
- On the national standards, respondents to the main consultation were asked whether the proposed set of standards covered all the right issues and whether there were missing elements. Around forty percent of respondents thought the standards were not missing anything. This view is shared by respondents to the children and young people’s consultation. Of those young people who responded to this question, sixty-five percent felt they could not see anything missing in the proposed standards. The main consultation also provided us with information on areas for further consideration and some of the possible challenges posed by the proposed standards. From the focus groups, there was broad agreement among participants that introducing national standards was a positive step. Some participants felt the standards were too basic and failed to acknowledge the varied needs of young people. It was most important to participants that the provision offered support tailored to the individual and specific needs of young people and this should be reflected in the proposed standards.
- For the Ofsted regime, respondents to the main consultation gave views on the advantages and disadvantages of a provider level and individual-setting level Ofsted registration and inspection regime. Advantages of the provider-level model were noted to be the ability for inspectors to get a holistic understanding of services, less administrative complexity and cost effectiveness. Disadvantages of this model were identified as less detailed quality assurance and accountability

(compared with a setting-level model), the possibility of missing poor practice and fewer opportunities for the voice of the service users to be heard. For the individual-setting level model, the advantages were noted as being improved quality in all settings and increased consistency of provision across multiple settings run by larger providers. The disadvantages identified by respondents include the need for additional resources and costs for providers, the practicality of the proposed scheme and concerns that this model could reduce the number of available providers. The consultation aimed at children and young people asked respondents whether Ofsted should inspect this type of provision. Of those that responded to this question, the overall majority were supportive of an Ofsted inspection regime. In the focus groups with young people, views were mixed about Ofsted inspecting accommodation. Those who liked the idea thought it would make providers deliver a good service to avoid being punished for poor quality accommodation. The young people who did not like the idea thought that providers would be on their best behaviour when Ofsted came to visit and could go back to bad practice following the visit.

- We asked respondents in the main consultation about wholly ‘independent’ settings, which accommodate young people with no ‘support’ being delivered and whether future regulations that would require a minimum level of support provided. An overwhelming majority of 82 percent of respondents did not think it would ever been appropriate for a 16- or 17-year-old to be placed in a setting with no level of support. In the focus groups with young people, there was an expectation among participants that ‘support’ should be provided in independent or semi-independent accommodation.

Across the consultations and focus groups we collected a great deal of intelligence that not only informs the policy decisions we are making now and communicating through this document, but also gives us great insight into the implementation and delivery challenges ahead. Introducing a new quality and regulatory regime will not be without these challenges.

Across the responses, providers and local authorities were very clear about the need for regulation to be proportionate while supporting the national standards and general shift towards more accountability for the quality of accommodation and support. They were clear that as we pursue this, we must enable the sector to continue to be agile, providing a diversity of provision that can meet the diversity of young people’s needs, and that regulation should not stifle this.

These points were also advanced by the children and young people who engaged through the public consultation and focus groups. Young people were frank about the fact that some of the provision that exists now, and which some of them have experienced in their years in the care system, is simply not good enough; some young people reported feeling unsafe in provision, not having basic provisions and some raised safeguarding concerns. Alongside this, many young people highlighted good examples of provision

where they were supported well to live semi-independently. A common theme raised by young people was the need for national standards, which they largely perceived to be 'generic', to allow for homes to be flexible in meeting their needs. Young people were clear that even while living semi-independently some young people will need and want a lot more support than others, whether this be an adult cooking with them, to supporting them with managing their finances and helping them access education, a job or an apprenticeship.

The Government will call this provision ‘Supported Accommodation for Young People’, end the use of independent provision, and publish guidance on the difference between care and support

Later in this document we set out how we will be pursuing the introduction of mandatory national standards and Ofsted-led registration and inspection for providers of unregulated independent and semi-independent provision. As we begin to regulate the sector, consistency of terminology will become increasingly important. We have long held the view that the term “unregulated” is unhelpful – it carries negative connotations even for provision that is often very good and is supporting young people to live semi-independently. The Government will no longer be using this term as we abolish “unregulated” provision and shift towards a system where there is no type of provision for looked after children and care leavers under-18 that is not regulated by Ofsted in some form.

We consulted on naming all this provision ‘supported accommodation for older children’. While there is a diverse range of providers, from shared housing to supported lodgings placements, almost all these placements deliver some form of support for older children aged 16 or 17 – with many also providing accommodation and support for young adults too, most commonly up to the age of 21 or 25.

It is clear from the consultations that there is mixed support for this term. Around 40% of respondents to the main consultation and over 50% of children and young people were supportive. However, of those who did not support the term, there was a significant proportion that mainly took issue with the term ‘older children’. In the focus groups, when young people were asked what this type of accommodation should be called, most didn’t mind. Some ideas that young people liked included ‘supported accommodation for young people’, ‘16 plus accommodation’, ‘regulated accommodation’ and ‘regulated provision for young people’.

Taking all views received into consideration, we will call all of this provision “**supported accommodation for young people**” in future, removing the use of commonly misinterpreted terms “unregulated” and “independent and semi-independent” provision to ensure that there is a consistent and universal understanding across the sector. This terminology is not intended to replace locally (and often nationally) understood terms such as “supported lodgings” and “shared housing” but will rather be used as an umbrella term for this provision as a whole and will ultimately be what providers register with Ofsted as. As part of our work to implement the new system, we will be carrying out more work with providers and local authorities to map out the types of provision to inform how providers register their services in future.

“It’s simple and lets you know what it’s about just with the title”

(Young person living in supported accommodation)

Mixed age groups

Further, through the consultation, respondents were clear that allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to be placed in accommodation alongside young people up to the age of 25 should still be permissible. This is currently common practice and, in certain circumstances, works well for the younger residents when transitioning into independent living and offers a sense of continuity that would avoid future moves that could be avoided should there be age restrictions in place.

With this in mind, we have no intention of banning the mixing of different age groups within supported accommodation. It will, however, be clear within national standards that providers must consider the relevant age groups and matching issues of individuals to mitigate risks before a young person is admitted or placed in these settings. A mixed setting may be right for one young person, but may present unnecessary risks for another. Local authorities and providers must make informed and sensible decisions on this.

The difference between “care” and “support”

Residential settings that deliver care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children must register as a children’s home. For those settings which are delivering support, as opposed to care, providers will need to engage with the new mandatory national standards and register with Ofsted, as set out later in this document.

We know that there is a need for clearer definitions between care and support, which is why we consulted on a series of indicators used by Ofsted to establish whether or not a setting needs to register as a children’s home. The majority of respondents to the consultation thought that all but one of the indicators put forward were either helpful or very helpful ways of making the distinction between care and support. There was, however, a general consensus that the indicators should be revised in a number of ways including that: they clearly acknowledge that young people can require assistance with tasks such as budgeting and healthcare until they develop the skills to manage them on their own; they take more account of the safeguarding issues that providers and local authorities have to deal with; and they recognise that the journey to independence for some young people can occur in a registered children’s homes so some of the indicators will also be true of them.

We believe that care and support are not mutually exclusive and that there should be a continuum of care and support as children get older, gain new experiences and prepare for adulthood. Where this concerns supported accommodation for young people, we believe that what truly makes the difference is the degree of autonomy and responsibility that is afforded to young people in these settings to make decisions about their own care, health, wellbeing and education.

We know that as we begin to regulate supported accommodation for young people, providers and local authorities will need stronger guidance on how to make these decisions in practice. We will develop statutory guidance on the spectrum of care and support. This will form part of broader statutory guidance on the new regime.

Independent provision

Further, as part of this consultation, we have considered the use of truly “independent” provision, where no form of support is provided for looked after children and care leavers, and where they simply hold their own tenancy without any intervention from local children’s services. We do not believe that this can ever be appropriate for young people under the age of 18 – children of this age remain children and even the most mature and experienced 16- and 17-year-olds, in the Government’s view, require some form of care or support. An overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) agreed with us and did not think that it would ever be appropriate for a 16- or 17-year-old to be placed in a setting with no formal support. In the focus groups, there was an expectation among participants that ‘support’ should be provided in this type of provision. It is vital that young people are supported as they transition into their next phase of life, to enable them to thrive and feel comfortable in their independence. While we recognise that there will only be a very small number of 16- and 17-year-olds in this type of placement, we are proposing to introduce regulations to prohibit placing looked after children and care leavers aged 16 or 17 in wholly independent settings by requiring all providers to provide some form of support for young people in line with the national standards where children are placed in accommodation other than children’s homes or foster placements. This will ensure that all young people are afforded the opportunity of support at least until they become adults, which is what we would want for all our children.

The Government will introduce mandatory national standards overseen by an Ofsted-led registration and inspection for provision that accommodates 16- and 17-year-old looked after children and care leavers

Looked after children and care leavers are some of the most vulnerable children and young people in society, and we must do all that we can to ensure that they have access to suitable and secure accommodation that meets their needs and keeps them safe. There are already strong statutory safeguards in place to make sure that foster care placements, children's homes and secure children's homes provide the highest quality care and accommodation for children. We must now pursue this for supported accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 years old.

National standards

We are clear that the best and most effective way for us to raise the bar for the quality of this provision, and ensure consistency across England, is by introducing mandatory national standards and Ofsted-led registration and inspection for providers of supported accommodation for young people. With this reform, all providers that accommodate looked after children and care leavers up to 18 will now be regulated by Ofsted.

Through our consultations, we sought views on national standards that were broken down into four key areas:

- *Leadership and management* – a standard that focuses on ensuring providers have statements of purpose and intent setting out their service offer, and the role of the staff in delivering this.
- *Child protection* – a standard focusing on workforce plans and training, including DBS checks and location assessments.
- *Accommodation* – a standard that ensures the quality and suitability of the built environment is safe and secure.
- *Support* – a standard focused on ensuring that support is provided for every young person, they have a say in what this is, and that there is a plan in place for delivering it.

We asked for views on the practicality of the national standards to different types of provision that exist in this sector, if they were missing anything and, what the cost implications of applying the new standards may be.

The responses we received through the consultation to the proposed national standards have given us confidence that the standards cover the right areas. Forty percent of respondents to the main consultation did not think anything was missing from the national

standards while the remainder of respondents did not coalesce around any suggested amendments. In the version for children and young people, sixty-five percent of those who responded to this question felt they could not see anything missing in the proposed standards. While this was the case, the most common themes identified for further consideration were for the Department to provide more detail on the specific training and qualifications that will be required under the standards, introducing formal requirements around pre-placement visits and interviews, and further strengthening the standards on accommodation and support.

We will consider this feedback and work with the sector to finesse the national standards before we expect to publish them on a “for information” basis in early 2022 ahead of laying the regulations later in the year. We must ensure that the national standards are suitable and that they provide a robust benchmark for high quality provision for young people while giving providers flexibility to tailor provision to meet their needs.

“I think it’s all been covered. I work in this area and was a social worker in fostering for the council for seven years prior to coming into this job role. There are a lot of inconsistencies across this area. Introducing standards, I welcome as it will help maintain a standard of all providers, help safeguard these young people and ensure they are receiving quality support.”

Service Manager of a 16+ support provision

Ofsted registration and inspection regime

Currently, this type of provision is not registered and inspected by Ofsted, which is why it has long been termed “unregulated” provision. Through our initial consultation in 2020, over 70% of respondents thought Ofsted should oversee a quality and inspection regime.

Through our latest consultation we have a clear verdict from children and young people, where the overwhelming majority were supportive of an Ofsted inspection regime, most commonly citing that this would raise the standards of provision. Of the small number of young people who felt Ofsted should not inspect this provision, the majority gave reasons that related to their fear that Ofsted would restrict their independence and impinge on their privacy. In the focus groups, reactions to the proposal of Ofsted inspecting accommodation were mixed among participants. Those who were concerned about the regime, were worried about Ofsted having the power to check on individual young people’s accommodation/rooms and were uncomfortable about the potential invasion of their privacy. We will carefully consider this in the design of the new regime to ensure that children and young people truly feel they have a voice in how their homes and people supporting them are inspected.

Through the main consultation we sought views on how Ofsted should regulate providers against the proposed national standards and particularly whether this should be through a setting-level registration and inspection regime which mirrors the approach to regulating children's homes, or a provider-level regime where providers register, and a sample of their settings are visited over a set time period.

While many advantages were put forward concerning a setting-level registration and inspection model, including improved quality in all settings and increased consistency of provision across multiple settings run by larger providers, we do not think that this type of regime would be proportionate for this type of provision. Local authorities and providers were overwhelmingly concerned about the impact that this model would have on sufficiency of placements, limiting flexibility in the market to tailor provision to young people and that over-regulation would lead to excessive and disproportionate costs for provision. We do not think that such an approach would be consistent with the principles of this type of provision, which is intended to support young people to develop their independence and afford them additional levels of autonomy and responsibility that they would not receive in a children's home.

We are therefore proceeding with the introduction of an Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime which registers at provider-level and visits a representative sample of their settings. This approach was supported through the consultation, with the most common advantages identified as enabling Ofsted inspectors to get a holistic understanding of services, less administrative complexity, cost effectiveness and ensuring providers are able to be more flexible in their accommodation portfolios to meet the needs of young people being referred.

These views were supported by Ofsted who believe that a provider-level model would be the most proportionate level of regulation for this sector, which focusses on placing older children's diverse needs at its heart and allows flexibility in the types of support provided.

The regulation of this provision will mean that, for the first time, all provision offering care and support for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17 will be registered and inspected by Ofsted. This will promote consistency and security to all children, right up to the age of 18. We believe it is essential that there is a high-quality, regulated option available to facilitate the development of the independence of young people who are ready for this type of provision. We strongly believe that this model will deliver rigorous and proportionate regulation whilst retaining the ability for providers to be flexible to respond to the needs of young people who are ready for this type of provision.

Ofsted will begin registering providers from April 2023. This will mark the opening of a minimum six-month registration window up to Autumn 2023, at which point the new national standards will become mandatory. After this point, no provider will be able to legally deliver supported accommodation for looked after children or care leavers aged

16 or 17 without being registered with Ofsted. Following the piloting of inspections, Ofsted will expect to begin the first inspections from April 2024.

“I think it would be good that it is checked out because we are the ones having to live here.”

Care leaver

We will work closely with Ofsted to design and implement the new regime, and will be legislating to provide them with the enforcement powers required to regulate these types of settings.

As the national regulator, Ofsted will be responsible for developing and consulting on the registration and inspection framework, building administrative systems to operate the regime, and recruiting and training a new workforce. The Department is providing Ofsted with £17.5m between 2022-25 to deliver this.

As part of the development of the new regime, Ofsted will work with the Department and the sector to determine:

- How representative samples of settings will be selected by Ofsted for visits;
- How Ofsted will apply the rating system to inspections and how this interacts with settings and providers;
- How often providers and settings need to register and be inspected by Ofsted;
- The fees, set by DfE and charged by Ofsted for registration and how often these need to be renewed;
- How Ofsted’s framework can be flexible enough to enable the broad range of provision in the sector to operate whilst ensuring there is a strong response to poor provision.

In acknowledgement of this significant undertaking, the Secretary of State has written to Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, outlining the work we need to do together on these issues. The Secretary of State’s letter and HMCI’s response can be found [here](#).

Supporting providers to prepare for the new regime

We understand that the implementation of national standards and the new Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime, which is set out in the next section of this document, may be challenging for some providers and that it could take time for some to shift towards them. We will, therefore, ensure that the need for radical and bold action to

protect children and improve their services is balanced against the need to be pragmatic about implementation and manage the impact on the provider base. We will work closely with providers and local authorities to ensure that we bring the provider market with us on this journey to implement the new regime. As part of this, we will invest £1.2m over 2022-2023 in a provider market awareness and preparedness campaign to ensure providers are ready for when the reforms take effect. This work will focus on raising awareness of the reform programme among the provider base, later working across the country with providers to prepare for the new national standards becoming mandatory and registering with Ofsted. We will be inviting bids for a multi-year contract for this work in early 2022.

Next Steps

We believe implementing mandatory national standards and an Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime that registers at provider-level will improve the lives and experiences of young people in these settings. This reform programme will ensure young people benefit from high quality accommodation and support that meets their needs and keeps them safe.

The national standards and regulatory regime will not come into effect immediately. There will be time for further engagement and input from the sector, for the provider market to prepare for the changes and registration and for Ofsted to develop the regulatory framework.

Introducing mandatory national standards and an Ofsted-led regulatory regime will require secondary legislation and our proposed timetable, set out below, is subject to parliamentary scrutiny which could mean there may be revisions to this timetable.

On the national standards, the Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders including care experienced young people, local authorities, the Association of Directors of Children's Services, providers in the sector and children's advocacy groups and charities to refine them ahead of publishing them for information in early 2022. Whilst these standards may be subject to final changes, publishing them early will allow the sector to start to implement changes and prepare for registration. We will develop statutory guidance for the national standards which will be published later in 2022.

Ofsted will work to develop a proportionate regulatory framework to inspect against the national standards, build administrative systems to operate the regime and recruit and train a new workforce. Ofsted will work closely with all key stakeholders to design this framework. Providers will begin to register with Ofsted in April 2023 and Ofsted will begin to pilot inspections from this time. We expect the national standards will become mandatory from Autumn 2023 following a minimum 6-month registration window, to enable providers to register before the standards come into force. We anticipate Ofsted will then implement the framework for inspections of supported accommodation in April 2024.

To further support and prepare providers for the changes, we will be inviting bids for a contract of up to £1.2 million in early 2022 to lead a project focussed on provider market awareness and preparedness. This programme will focus on readying the sector for the reforms and we will provide greater detail on this programme in due course.

The Department thanks the sector and our care experienced young people for their contributions to the consultation, and extended work with us over the last few years on these issues. We have some challenging pieces of work ahead and we look forward to continuing this engagement as we implement and deliver these reforms.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation or facilitated feedback from children and young people

- 123 Supported Accommodation
- 1625 independent people
- A2Dominion Housing Group Ltd
- Abiding Limited
- Acacia Consultants and Associates Ltd
- Acorn Independence
- Action for Children
- Adriel supported living
- Ambitions support Ltd
- ANEW Young People Services Ltd
- Article 39
- Assist Care Team
- Athena Housing and Support Limited
- Barnardos
- Barnardo's
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Become
- Birmingham Children's Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Blackpool Council
- Brighter Futures for Children
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Byrne House Ltd
- Calcot Services for Children
- Care and Community Ltd
- CareTech
- Caring for communities and people
- Caring Thoughts For Future Steps
- Catalyst Housing
- Catch-22 / NLCBF
- CCS NHS Trust
- Centrepont
- Cheshire East Council
- Children's Services Development Group (CSDG)
- Citizen Housing
- Connect PA
- Crystal Care Solutions
- CSM Independence
- Depaul UK
- Derventio Housing Trust
- Dove Adolescent Services
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Essex County Council
- Fair Ways
- Foundations Support and Care Services

- Fresh Start Independence Project Ltd (Affiliated to North West Supported Lodgings Forum)
- Fusion Independence
- Future Horizons Support Ltd.
- Fylde Coast YMCA
- Genell Support CIC
- Gipsil Ltd
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Help Supported Accommodation Ltd
- Herefordshire Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hightown housing association
- HMO NE Ltd Trading as ForeverCare
- Home for Good
- Homeless Link
- Horizon Care and Education
- Indigo Support
- Isabel's Voice
- Jamores Ltd
- JMB Supported Living Services Ltd.
- Just for Kids Law
- Kent County Council
- Keys Group
- KPMSUK LTD
- Lancashire County Council
- LB Brent
- Leicestershire County Council (Children and Family Services)
- LGSCO
- Livewest Homes
- Local Government Association
- Local Solutions
- London Borough of Croydon
- London Children's Social Care Practice Leaders Group
- Look Ahead
- Love146
- Love146
- M3 Project
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Milton Keynes Council
- Mosscafe St Vincent's Housing Group Ltd
- Moving On
- MovingUp Care
- Nacro
- Nagalro, The Professional Association for Children's Guardians, Family Court Advisers and Independent Social Workers
- National LADO Network (NLN)
- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
- NCERCC
- NCPL
- NETPEX LTD
- Newcastle City Council

- Next Generation Housing Services LTD
- Next Stage
- Next Step Care Management Ltd
- NHS Devon CCG
- NHS England and Improvement (North Region Looked After Children Group)
- NHS Somerset CCG
- NIROMP
- Noor Homes Ltd
- North East Lincolnshire CCG
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- North West Association of Directors of Children's Services
- North West London CCG
- Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- Northumberland County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- of Children's Services
- Ofsted
- Omega Care Group
- Outcomes Focused Support Ltd
- Pathways to Independence UK
- Plus One
- Plymouth City Council
- Polaris Community
- Positive Action in the Community
- Ready Homes
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium
- Rusa Care
- Salvation Army
- Salvation Army Housing Association
- Sanctuary Group
- Sapphire Independent Housing
- SCC
- School Development Support Agency
- Sefton Council
- Sefton MBC children's services, corporate parenting team 1
- Shaw Trust
- SMBC Community Supported Lodgings (affiliated member of North West Supported Lodgings Forum)
- Smile Care Services
- Social Care London
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- St Basils
- Staffordshire County Council
- Step Ahead Services
- Stockport Council
- Stockton Borough Council
- Stonewater

- Surrey County Council
- SW Education & Care
- Swindon Borough Council
- TACT
- Tameside MBC
- Teen Support Services
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- The Association of Directors
- The Baca Charity
- The Care Leavers Association
- The Foyer Federation
- The Foyer Federation
- The Pathways Group
- The Salvation Army
- The You Trust
- Together Trust
- Trafford Council
- Two Saints
- UK Care Partnership Ltd
- Upwards Care Solutions
- Utopia supported housing
- Wakefield Council
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- Waltham Forest
- Warrington Borough Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- West Mercia Police
- West Sussex County Council
- WM Childrens Services
- Worcestershire Children First
- Worcestershire County Council
- YMCA England & Wales
- York University
- Youth Justice Board
- Youthlinx



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