

Looked After Children (Distance Placements) Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

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[AS INTRODUCED]

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TO

Require local authorities to publish information about looked after children in distance placements; to require local authorities to develop and publish sufficiency plans in respect of their duty under section 22G of the Children Act 1989; to require the Secretary of State to publish a national sufficiency plan in respect of looked after children in distance placements; and for connected purposes.

BE IT ENACTED by the King’s most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1 Definitions

In this Act—

“looked after child” has the meaning given by section 562J of the Education Act 1996;

“distance placement” means a placement for a child who is looked after by a local authority which is greater than or equal to 20 miles from their place of residence; 5

“local authority in England” has the meaning given by section 1(3) of the Children and Social Work Act 2017;

“local placement” means a placement for a child who is looked after by a local authority which is within that local authority’s area; and 10

“placement” has the same meaning as in section 22C(6) of the Children Act 1989.

2 Duty to publish information about looked after children in distance placements 15

A local authority in England must collect and publish statistics about the number of looked after children who, due to a lack of appropriate local placement—

- (a) are living in a distance placement;
- (b) have been moved to a distance placement in the previous 12 months. 20

3 Local sufficiency plan

- (1) A local authority in England must publish an annual local sufficiency plan.
- (2) A local sufficiency plan published under this section must include—
 - (a) a description of the actions the local authority is taking to meet the requirements of section 22G of the Children Act 1989; 5
 - (b) the information published by the local authority under section 2;
 - (c) information about the measures a local authority is taking to prevent any looked after child being moved to a distance placement due to a lack of appropriate local placement;
 - (d) information about the extent to which the local authority has involved any relevant looked after child in its decision-making prior to moving any such children to a distance placement. 10

4 National sufficiency plan

- (1) As soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, the Secretary of State must publish a national sufficiency plan. 15
- (2) A national sufficiency plan published under this section must include—
 - (a) the information collected and published by all local authorities in England under section 2;
 - (b) information about measures taken by the Secretary of State to—
 - (i) support local authorities in England to meet the requirements of section 22G of the Children Act 1989; 20
 - (ii) support local authorities in England to prevent looked after children from being moved to distance placements due to a lack of appropriate local placement; and
 - (c) an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures under subsection (b) during the previous financial year. 25

5 Extent, commencement, and short title

- (1) This Act extends to England and Wales.
- (2) This Act comes into force on the day on which it is passed.
- (3) This Act may be cited as the Looked After Children (Distance Placements) Act 2025. 30

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Presented by Jake Richards

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