

[News story: Independent review of foster care published](#)

An independent [review](#) of foster care in England has been published today, setting out recommendations to improve the fostering system for children and foster carers.

The independent review, commissioned by the Department for Education and conducted by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers, looked at the purpose of foster care and what it means to those closely involved in the system.

It makes 36 recommendations for government, local authorities and independent fostering agencies including:

- Ensuring foster carers are supported and included in decision-making;
- Improving foster placement commissioning, and matching;
- Greater stability and permanence for children and young people in foster care.

The review is part of the government's drive to ensure that children living in foster care have access to a stable and loving environment and foster carers get the support they need. This includes the [announcement](#) in December 2017 that the government will extend its 30-hour childcare offer to foster carers.

Nadhim Zahawi MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, said:

We welcome this thorough and insightful report into the fostering system, which first and foremost is about identifying and addressing the needs of children in foster care.

The report gives us an opportunity to celebrate foster care and to recognise the invaluable role foster parents play in the lives of vulnerable children. We are committed to supporting them in this role, and that's why we recently announced that we will extend our 30-hour childcare offer to foster children to provide extra help for foster parents.

We will carefully consider the review's recommendations, alongside those from the Education Select Committee, over the coming months to determine how they can help us to make sustainable improvements to the fostering system and to the outcomes for looked after children.

To conduct the review Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers drew on a wide range of information, including a public call for evidence as well as meetings with local authorities, independent fostering agencies, representative

organisations, academics, foster carers and children and young people.

The Department published a [report](#) in July, which brought together existing evidence around the fostering system to provide an overview of current provision.

New statistics also published today provide additional analysis on looked-after children in foster care, which helped to inform the review.

The review also includes a survey of the views and experiences of children in foster care, conducted by the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield.

Reviewer Sir Martin Narey said:

Foster Carers make a remarkable contribution to the lives of children often damaged by neglect and that contribution needs to be recognised. But fostering can be made even more effective, and could make an even greater contribution to the welfare to some of the country's most disadvantaged children. Foster Carers must be allowed much greater authority in making decisions about the children in their care and they need to be liberated to offer the physical affection which is a vital and necessary part of most children's healthy upbringing.

We make 36 recommendations and if all were to be implemented, as I hope they will be, then local authorities will have foster carers who are better motivated and better appreciated. And they will be offering greater permanency for children whose lives in care are too often disrupted. At the same time local authorities should make significant financial savings through obtaining better deals from most of the independent fostering providers, the commissioning of which is too often inadequate.

And his co-reviewer, Mark Owers said:

Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days of the year, foster carers help children in care to feel safe, loved and part of their family. We can be proud of fostering, local authorities and independent fostering agencies alike. But we can do better.

Foster carers must consistently get the support they need and the respect they deserve. More children need to enjoy placement stability and a genuine sense of permanence. Commissioning has to improve. We need to help more people, and with greater diversity, to become foster carers. We are confident that our recommendations will improve foster care in England.

The Government will respond to the report and the recommendations in Spring 2018, setting out the future programme of work for the fostering system.