

Local authorities having to find homes for children at the 'last minute'

Press release

An Ofsted report published today, finds that local authorities are struggling to find homes for children coming into care.



Local authorities are struggling with a last minute dash to find homes for children coming into care due to the rising demand for places and a lack of suitable accommodation, according to Ofsted.

In a report published today, Ofsted found that the lack of enough suitable accommodation, and the need to find placements quickly, mean local authorities often struggle to plan for and meet their legal duty to offer sufficient accommodation for children in need of care. Difficulty forecasting demand and the need for urgent placements leaves local authorities with little option but to respond to individual cases as and when they arise.

Some local authorities told Ofsted that a lack of time and resources for forward planning results in a last-minute response when a child comes into care. Even when local authorities can plan, there is often a lack of available accommodation and care for children with more complex needs.

Local authorities also noted tension in their relationships with some private providers and their 'power' over the children's social care market. Some suggested that providers can cherry-pick certain children, making it difficult for them to follow their plan and fulfil their sufficiency duty. Conversely, other local authorities highlighted how positive relationships with providers mean they are better able to find homes for children with more complex needs and negotiate the cost of placements.

Ofsted's report draws on interviews and focus groups with social workers, regional commissioning groups and other local authority staff.

The research also found:

- local authorities' knowledge about providers and agencies is often held

- by individuals, which can be lost when there are staff changes
- some local authorities are concerned about the ageing population of foster carers in their area and their ability to plan for long term placements

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Regulation and Social Care:

Today's report lays bare some of the challenges facing local authorities when it comes to finding the care children need. More children are coming into care, many with high-level physical and mental health needs. The need to find places for these children quickly overrides local authorities' long-term planning.

It is clear that these findings are set against the issues affecting children's social care nationally, and local authorities cannot solve the sufficiency issue on their own. There is a lack of suitable homes in the right places, particularly for children with the most complex needs – this needs to be addressed.

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[Vice Admiral appointed NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe](#)

Press release

Vice Admiral Blount will take up the appointment in the rank of Admiral in succession to General Sir Tim Radford in July 2023.



Vice Admiral Keith Blount is to be appointed NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), demonstrating the UK's continued leadership in the Alliance. For the past three years, he has been Commander of NATO's Maritime Command.

Vice Admiral Blount will take up the appointment in the rank of Admiral in succession to General Sir Tim Radford in July 2023.

Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe serves as the second in command to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and concurrently as the deputy head of Allied Command Operations. This is the first time the role has been held by a representative from the Royal Navy.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

I am delighted to congratulate Vice Admiral Keith Blount on his promotion to Admiral and appointment as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

His appointment demonstrates the United Kingdom's unwavering commitment to NATO and our leadership in European defence. I pay tribute to the contribution Vice Admiral Blount has made to the Royal Navy and the Alliance in his career to date. He brings extensive leadership experience and has served on operations across the globe alongside our allies and partners. I look forward to continuing to work with him and NATO.

Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said:

Vice Admiral Blount's appointment as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe is testament to his leadership of NATO's Maritime Forces at this pivotal time for European security.

It also reflects the United Kingdom's commitment to the Alliance on land and in the air, our exceptional nuclear contribution, our growing cyber capabilities, and our pivotal role on NATO's northern flank, all of which make Britain the leading European ally.

Vice Admiral Keith Blount said:

It is an absolute honour to have been selected to succeed General Sir Tim Radford as the next Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

He has been instrumental in guiding NATO's work at a critical time for the Alliance and its Partners and I look forward to maintaining the momentum.

The strength of NATO lies with its people and we have a highly skilled and dedicated team that is laser focused on our collective defence.

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Published 18 November 2022

Millions across Great Britain see energy bills reduced as £1.8 billion is paid out in first month of government scheme

- £1.8 billion was paid out last month through the government's Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS), reducing energy costs for over 27 million households across Great Britain
- £136 million worth of vouchers have been provided to traditional prepayment meter customers, with government urging households to redeem them
- a second instalment of the EBSS payment will reduce November bills, adding to wider government support to protect against soaring energy prices

Over 27 million households across Great Britain received money off their energy bills last month as the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) provided £1.8 billion in payments.

New figures released today show the EBSS successfully provided a £66 discount for 97% of eligible households in England, Scotland and Wales in its first month.

This is the first payment made through the EBSS since it launched in October and will see households receive a £400 discount on energy bills paid in 6 monthly instalments. The second instalment of the EBSS will reduce households' November energy bills, which brings the total amount spent on the

scheme so far to £3.8 billion.

Vouchers were sent to all 2 million customers with traditional pre-payment meters. The government today urged consumers to redeem vouchers as soon as possible, after figures showed only around two thirds had already done so. Suppliers will tell customers where to redeem them, for example at a Post Office branch or a PayPoint shop. Payzone outlets are unable to accept the vouchers.

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Grant Shapps, said:

The government is committed to supporting people facing unique stresses with the cost of living and rising energy costs. Today's figures show how we are making a difference in over 27 million homes across Great Britain.

All vouchers have now been sent to customers who should have them, so I urge everyone who uses a traditional prepayment meter to make sure they receive their voucher from their supplier and redeem them promptly so they get the energy bill support they are entitled to.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, James Cartlidge, said:

We are facing a global energy crisis driven by Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, and we know this is a huge challenge for people here in the UK.

That's why we have taken direct action, ensuring millions of households are protected this winter.

From December onwards, the amount discounted from energy bills will increase to £67 as the scheme continues to provide support to households over the winter months.

Administered by energy suppliers, the scheme is designed so customers receive the rebate in the same way that they pay their energy bills, such as via direct debit, credit, smart meters and traditional prepayment meters. For the small minority who have not yet received the discount for October, this was down to factors such as issues around a customer's bank details where they pay via direct debit, and customers on pre-payment meters who are yet to redeem the vouchers.

Gillian Cooper, Head of Energy Policy for Citizens Advice, said:

As winter starts to set in, this financial support should help millions of people to keep their heating and lights on. It's vital it reaches everyone who needs it.

Most people should get the payment directly, but if you use a traditional prepayment meter, you'll be sent monthly vouchers that you can redeem at your local shop or Post Office. If you haven't received the first 2 payments, contact your energy supplier as soon as possible.

Earlier this year, the government introduced new powers that mean intermediaries, such as landlords, must pass on savings made under the EBSS and other energy support schemes to end users, who don't pay their energy bills directly, for example tenants.

Those on traditional prepayment meters are sent monthly vouchers by their supplier via text, email or post with suppliers having contacted customers in advance of the scheme launching to advise how the discount will be applied.

Vouchers expire after 90 days to ensure it helps people over the winter months but can be reissued by the supplier on request. Suppliers must make several attempts to contact customers who have not redeemed their vouchers, with the scheme also allowing for consumers to transfer EBSS payments from electricity meters to gas meters. All vouchers must be redeemed by 30 June 2023.

The EBSS comes in addition to wider government support to help households with the cost of living this Winter. As well as discounts provided through the EBSS, the government's Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) will save a typical household around £700 this winter, based on what energy prices would have been under the current price cap – reducing bills by roughly a third. The EPG will continue to provide support for another 12 months from April 2023, and with energy prices forecast to remain high, this equates to an average of £500 support for households in 2023 to 2024. An additional £1,200 of support in direct payments is being provided to vulnerable households this year, with £26 billion worth of targeted support to help protect the most vulnerable announced by the Chancellor for the next financial year.

The government's Energy Bills Support Scheme is being provided in monthly instalments over 6 months from October 2022, totalling £400 in all. The non-repayable discount is applied automatically to consumers' energy bills. See more [details on the design and delivery of the Energy Bills Support Scheme](#), including how support is delivered to customers who pay for energy as part of all-inclusive bills.

Today's figures show the delivery of EBSS in England, Scotland and Wales during 1 to 31 October 2022. The data is published on GOV.UK: [Transparency data – Energy Bills Support Scheme: payments made by electricity suppliers to customers](#).

The first full month of delivery statistics showed £1,834,261,440 worth of payments were delivered through the government's Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS), providing support with energy bills for 27,791,840 households across Great Britain.

In total, 97% of payments due to customers have been delivered by suppliers. The reasons why payments may not have been delivered include vouchers being provided to prepayment customers that have yet to be cashed, and issues related to a customer's bank details including payment bounces. Customers may receive their payments at different rates due to suppliers' different operating mechanisms, customer bases and geographic coverage.

The figures show £3,822,585,343 has so far been allocated to energy suppliers to deliver EBSS payments during October and November. This includes a contingency payment of 1.5% for the October 2022 payment. Some suppliers are provided with an additional contingency payment where they have provided evidence to support this need.

The data has been provided by electricity suppliers, who were asked to provide data on their payments to eligible customers up to 1 November 2022.

Further data showing additional breakdowns by region, local authority and constituency will be released in December due to a lag in collecting this data from suppliers.

The government is also working to develop an Alternative Funding scheme to provide £400 of equivalent support with energy bills for the small minority of households in England, Scotland and Wales that are not able to receive support under the EBSS. More details, including eligibility criteria and which groups will be in scope, will be announced as soon as possible.

Households in Northern Ireland will receive a £400 discount on their energy bills through the Northern Ireland Energy Bills Support Scheme (NI EBSS) this winter. Details will be announced shortly.

See also

The Energy Bills Support Scheme forms part of the government's £37 million Cost of Living Support package, providing [Help for Households](#) with rising prices, targeted at those most in need.

Momentum for change is building around the UN: UK statement on reform of SC

Thank you President.

May I start by joining others in congratulating Ambassador Albanai of Kuwait and Ambassador Mlynár on their appointment as Co-Chairs of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform. Under their leadership, we look forward to engaging in and driving forward the IGN.

President,

Momentum for change is building around the UN. The world is not the same today as it was in 1946 when the Security Council first met, or as it was in 1965 when it was last expanded. The challenges we face today are more complex and more interconnected. Including threats to the Charter that bind us together, and its principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The way we respond must change too.

Our position is well known. The United Kingdom has long called for the expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

We support the creation of new permanent seats for India, Germany, Japan and Brazil, as well as permanent African representation on the Council.

We also support an expansion of the non-permanent category of membership, taking the Security Council's total membership to somewhere in the mid-twenties.

With these changes, the Council would be more representative of the world today. And, coupled with a renewed commitment to the UN Charter, it would be better able to respond decisively to threats to international peace and security.

President,

Since the General Assembly last met on this topic, we have seen the veto used egregiously in the Council, to prevent action that would have saved lives, and to censor criticism of Russia's unjust and illegal war in Ukraine.

We were proud therefore to co-sponsor the Veto Initiative that now enables this Assembly to hold vetoing powers to account.

For our own part, the United Kingdom has not exercised our right to use the veto since 1989. We prefer to persuade Council members of the merit of our positions to secure their support in the Council. As supporters of the Accountability Coherence and Transparency group Code of Conduct, we remain committed not to vote against a credible draft resolution to prevent or end a mass atrocity, and we encourage all States to join us.

President,

We have a shared goal of reforming the Security Council. The upcoming Intergovernmental Negotiations are an opportunity for practical and focused discussions on how to make it a reality.

Text based negotiations would help all countries in this assembly to engage constructively on this important issue, and would help us make swifter progress.

I Thank you President.

UK partners with Mexican beekeepers to help mitigate climate change

The UK's Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions (UK PACT) programme contributes to tackling climate change through the provision of UK expertise and knowhow. Since March 2021, the UK PACT Building Capacity for Beekeepers project in the states of Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo has been addressing the consequences of deforestation, including a marked reduction in honey production. The initiative provides apiarists with training on how to increase honey harvests and preserve local biodiversity. Thus far, the project has supported over 600 beekeepers to increase their incomes and improve their livelihoods, especially for women producers.

In southern Mexico, UKPACT helps beekeepers mitigate climate change.

In the municipality of Escarcega in Campeche, the project is re-introducing previously deforested tree species that produce the nectar and pollen, which bees require to produce honey. This is a long-term strategy to transform positively the landscape around the beekeeping communities. In addition, it will increase their honey output and help densify the region's flora. This will regenerate the natural ecosystems for the bees and help mitigate the effects of climate change. It will also strengthen the economy in the communities where apiculture remains one of the most important commercial activities.

In the state of Quintana Roo on the Caribbean coast, apiarists used to produce 300 kilos of honey with only ten beehives. Now, they require 50 beehives or more to produce that same volume, which translates to a substantial increase in capital and operating costs. This, in part, is due to the consequences of deforestation, such as warmer temperatures, an increase in pests and damage to flowers. These changes to the environment demand that beekeepers provide greater care of the bee colonies. UK PACT is training them how to do exactly that.

The apiarists in these communities have never received technical formation. The training therefore provides a mix of theoretical and practical components covering from basic concepts through to advanced techniques in beekeeping. This includes; the latest procedures on queen bee production; elimination of pests through eco-friendly solutions; and colony nutrition based on special nourishment during extreme weather conditions. Thanks to this tailor made capacity building, the apiarists have doubled their honey production.

María Eugenia H. an apiarist from the Ejido Social community in Campeche salid:

We especially enjoy getting opportunities to practice what we learn. This is very helpful. It is not the same as just listening and writing. By doing, we learn a lot more”.

In southern Mexico, UKPACT helps beekeepers mitigate climate change.

The apiarists are also developing complementary skills such as woodworking to build their own beehives. The training has developed into a community building exercise that more clearly recognises and remunerates women for their productive roles in apiculture.

Key to the project’s success was collaboration with government counterparts that facilitated access and support to the communities. Efrain Villanueva Arcos, former Minister of the Environment of the state of Quintana Roo shared:

This activity represents an opportunity for the honey producers to export and add value to their products. Above all, we want to convey the message that we have to take care of our rainforests because they promote the wellbeing of local families. This project that UK PACT has started is very important for us in the state of Quintana Roo.

Sayda Rodríguez Gomez, Secretary of Sustainable Development of the State of Yucatán stated:

UK PACT has provided support to understand that apiculture is a multidimensional production process. We are convinced that the next step is to develop a more sustainable value chain that benefit both people and the environment.

Going forward, this project will continue to strengthen the business and technical skills of the beekeeping communities. This partnership between the UK and Mexico will also help mitigate climate change and promote sustainable economic development in southern Mexico.

In southern Mexico, UKPACT helps beekeepers mitigate climate change.