

## CHILDCARE ACT 2006 - SUMMARY

The Childcare Act has four parts: duties on local authorities in England (Part 1); duties on local authorities in Wales (Part 2); regulation and inspection arrangements for childcare providers in England (Part 3); and general provisions (Part 4). Key provisions are as follows.

**Sections 1-5** require local authorities and their NHS and Jobcentre Plus partners to work together to improve the outcomes of all children up to 5 and reduce inequalities between them, by ensuring early childhood services are integrated to maximise access and benefits to families - underpinning a Sure Start Children's Centre for every community

**Sections 6, 8-11 & 13** require local authorities to assess the local childcare market and to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. Childcare will only be deemed sufficient if meets the needs of the community in general and in particular those families on lower incomes and those with disabled children. Local authorities take the strategic lead in their local childcare market, planning, supporting and commissioning childcare. Local authorities will not be expected to provide childcare direct but will be expected to work with local private, voluntary and independent sector providers to meet local need.

**Section 7** re-enacts the duty for local authorities to secure a free minimum amount of early learning and care for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents want it.

**Section 12** extends the existing duty to provide information to parents, to ensure parents and prospective parents can access the full range of information they may need for their children right through to their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Local authorities will be required to ensure that this service is available to all parents and that it is pro-active in reaching those parents who might otherwise have difficulty accessing the information service.

**Sections 39-48** introduce the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which will build on and bring together the existing Birth to Three Matters, Foundation Stage and national standards for under 8s day care and childminding. The EYFS will support providers in delivering high quality integrated early education and care for children from birth to age 5.

**Sections 31-98** reform and simplify the framework for the regulation of childcare and early education to reduce bureaucracy and focus on raising quality and standards. All providers caring for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday will be required to register on the Early Years register and deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (unless exceptionally exempted). Childcare settings providing for children from the 1 September following their fifth birthday up to the age of eight must register on the compulsory part of the Ofsted Childcare Register (unless they are exempt.) The Act introduced certain requirements that all providers who are registering on the Ofsted Childcare Register will need to meet some of which are provided for in the Act but most of which are laid down in associated Regulations made under the Act.. Those childcare providers who are not

obliged to register on the compulsory part of the Ofsted Childcare Register can choose to join the voluntary part of the Register. These providers will also need to meet certain requirements, which are laid down in Regulations made under the Act.

**Sections 99-101** allow for the collection of information about young children to inform funding and support the local authority duties under the Act.