

Chapter 6: Local authority support for children and families

This chapter provides details of the law in respect of support for children and their families. It starts with s17 and the concept of children in need. The definition of 'in need' is worth dwelling on in our opinion. In practice it is often taken for granted and accounted for by documents to do with threshold criteria and service provision. The wording in s17 concerning services – 'by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs' is critical. Students really do need to understand the relevance of this reference to services. You may want to explore the pressures on the provision of services locally.

Families with no recourse to public funds is another area which often causes students difficulty. The law is set out in the chapter as are a couple of cases which illustrate how the law is interpreted. There are slides available to assist you with these areas.

The new Corporate Parenting principles are described and slide 9 provides these for your presentation to students. As yet there is no evidence about whether these principles will have any practical effect on looked after children. You may want to make enquiries locally to establish that for yourselves.

Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Children Act describes specific duties to children in need. It is a lengthy list. Slide 8 mentions these but you will need to fill in the details.

We have included discussion about consent and s20 accommodation following the numerous cases where consent was an issue. The Williams case is a useful one to follow from High Court to Supreme Court. Baroness Hale's nine points are detailed in the chapter and we provide slides for these too.

The provision for care leavers is set out. This area of law is relatively straight forward. Some slides are provided or you to use. The role of the IRO is described too more because social workers will have to understand the role rather than as a guide for IROs.