

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Gwasanaethau i blant sydd wedi bod mewn gofal: archwilio diwygio radical | Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform

Ymateb gan Annibynnol | Evidence from Individual

Before care: Safely reducing the number of children in the care system

Please outline a maximum of three top priorities for radical reform of services for safely reducing the number of children in the care system.

Priority 1

Health, education, social services and members of the public to be responsible for identifying children (or pregnancies) at risk and enforcing parenting skills classes on parents who give cause for concern. Not leaving it until it is too late.

Priority 2

Have designated family protection officers who is in charge of child concern referrals. This person would head a team to include a representative social worker, teacher, doctor, youth worker, Women's services, fostering agency, in fact, anyone who can be the eyes and ears of vulnerable children and young people. This team would support caring families in every way possible to help them stay together. For example If a child is off school - go to the home. See what is wrong, no food, no school clothes, someone hurt, mental health, county lines and so on.

Priority 3

Don't criminalise children and young people who have turned to crime due to their circumstances. They should never be in courts or probation officers. They will meet the wrong people. Their life's chances are lessened, no qualifications, no jobs no decent relationships. Give community tasks instead. Let them help other vulnerable people, but also supply hot meals, advice and possibly a small income.

In care: Quality services and support for children in care

Please outline a maximum of three top priorities for radical reform of services for children in care.

Priority 1

Recruiting more childcare professionals to include social workers and child protection officers must be priority. More on the job learning and promotion. Less academic, more hands on to gain experience. May attract older candidates as well as young.

Priority 2

Make therapeutic foster care training a priority for social workers and foster parents. Forget recruiting foster parent to manage behaviour.

Priority 3

Increase the notice that foster carers have to give (unless extreme cases). Stickability is key. The longer a child stays with a loving foster family, the more they adopt their values and work ethic.

After care: On-going support when young people leave care

Please outline a maximum of three top priorities for radical reform of the on-going support provided when young people leave care.

Priority 1

Encourage when I am ready fostering. The longer young people stay with caring foster families, the more likely they will get qualifications and or jobs and learn necessary skills to cope as adults. Plus they will belong to a family who would be on hand to offer support.

Priority 2

Returning a foster child to birth family, is wrong. Foster children who return home after living with foster carers for many years are often considered strangers and their needs are not met. Birth families may not have a good work ethic and the young person may be encouraged to claim benefits and lose the ability to apply for meaningful employment. Hence reducing life chances.

Priority 3

Support for care leavers until age 25 should really mean that. The "you stand on your own 2 feet" attitude is a negative concept. Realise that care leavers may be 18 chronologically but proper therapeutic care and support, should recognise that developmentally young people are nowhere near able to cope as an adult. This needs to be taken into consideration and care should continue until they really are ready.

Anything else

From my experience, the children who have the least contact with birth families, stand a better chance of adopting the values, work ethic and attitudes of their foster families. They also have more chance of a foster family's support for life. The conflict between benefitting from living with a foster family and loyalties towards their birth family can create all sorts of problems for young people. However, if there is nothing else available in terms of accommodation, education and jobs after leaving care, who can blame them for returning home.