

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc  
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People  
and Education Committee**

Julie Morgan,

Deputy Minister for Social Services

9 October 2023

Dear Julie,

**Ongoing work relating to Radical Reform for Care Experienced Children**

Thank you once again for appearing before Committee on 14 September to discuss your response to our report on services for care experienced children and young people. We appreciate how quickly you accepted our invitation to give evidence over an extended 2-hour slot, ensuring that we had the time we needed to discuss these important issues in detail.

We welcomed the additional clarity you gave to explain why the Welsh Government felt unable to accept some of our key recommendations, where it was taking work forward in other areas, and where you may have changed your thinking since the publication of our report.

Further to the evidence session, you'll be aware that we have already sent recent correspondence in respect of funding for the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts and also in respect of the lack of clarity about the data on the rates of agency staff in the statutory children's social care workforce.

Members also have some factual and policy issues arising from the session on 14 September that we are unclear about. We would therefore welcome your response to the questions in the Annex to this letter.

I acknowledge that this is a particularly busy time of year for you and for your officials. I would therefore appreciate a response no later than 11 December. Given this extended response deadline, I would be grateful if you could reply to all our questions in full. If you are unable to do so within this extended period, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee clerks who can work with you to find a suitable timetable for your response.

Yours sincerely,

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Jayne Bryant

Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



# ANNEX

## National Service Standards for Children's Services in Wales

1. The Committee would welcome further written information on this new National Service Standards for Children's Services in Wales. (relevant transcript excerpts below)

*"Work is firmly under way to deliver a national practice framework. The framework will be the first set of national standards for children's services in Wales, sitting alongside things like the all-Wales safeguarding procedures, and we will be delivering up to five new standards of practice by the end of 2023, with further standards being co-produced. It will address the key concerns that young people have raised about practice in your report, which I've taken very great notice of."*

*"[...] four draft standards have now been produced. One of those is around child-inclusive practice; children and young people who go missing; manageable workloads; and continuing care."*

## Corporate Parenting Charter

2. Details of how compliance with the charter will be monitored and by who?
3. An updated list of which agencies have signed the voluntary charter to date
4. How children and young people can see which agencies have signed up?

## Care as a Protected Characteristic

5. Will you include care experienced older young people and adults in your discussions?

Thank you for updating us on the following:

*"I'm going to be working with officials across Welsh Government to explore this further with care-experienced people and children as part of the future care experience summits with Voices from Care. So, we will be exploring this, but there are different views that have been given to us, so it's not a united view."*

We have been told by some older young people that they have changed their minds on this as they have got older. Whilst as children they may have been concerned about stigma, but as they have got older, and understood what life is like beyond care. We have been asked to convey to you that whilst children may have different views on this issue, talking to care experienced adults about their views is important too.

## Advocacy

6. Clarity on the Welsh Government's latest position on our recommendation that care experienced children should have a statutory right to long-term, independent advocacy support on an 'opt-out' basis?

In the Welsh Government's response in July 2023 the response was 'Reject', however in our most recent meeting you said "[...]my response did not outrightly reject opt-out advocacy."

## Children in unregistered placements

7. What is the current number of children in the care of Welsh local authorities living in unregistered accommodation as of 11 November 2023?

We were particularly concerned to hear that as of 11 September there were 30 children who are legally within the care of Welsh local authorities but who are living in unregistered placements. Whilst we appreciate the significant pressures on accommodation, having such a significant number of children in what are essentially 'illegal placements' is clearly of grave concern. You'll be aware that in July 2023, you rejected our recommendation to publish an action plan to reduce the number of children in unregistered placements by December 2023.

## Children subject to Deprivation of liberty orders

8. What is the current number of children in the care of Welsh local authorities as of 11 November 2023

Again we were concerned to hear that there were six children subject to Deprivation of Liberty orders as of 11 September.

## Eliminate Profit

Although the Eliminate Profit work was not directly within our Inquiry Terms of Reference, we recognise that it is a Welsh Government priority and that you have emphasised to us at the scrutiny session that it is being taken forward "because young people said that that was what they wanted".

As part of our forthcoming scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2024-25, we will be asking for some financial information in respect of how the £68 million allocation over three-years has been allocated, as part of our broader budget request.

9. In terms of delivering this commitment, we would be grateful for
  - The current estimate of the number of children from Welsh local authorities placed in independent/ private placements in Wales

- Details of the transition plan / timelines to move these children or to transition the placements to local authorities / third sector providers
- How many children from England are placed in independent/ private placements in Wales? Plans to mitigate the unintended consequences of pressures on Welsh local authorities and health boards which could arise if more children from outside Wales move into these placements from 2027 onwards when they can no longer be used to place children from Wales.

## Data

Ahead of the scrutiny session on 14 September as part of a wider request for information, we asked for specific information in relation to each point of data not currently routinely collected and published in Wales (as set out on pages 50 to 52 of our report and the WCPP report), and a narrative on the Welsh Government's rationale for this not being necessary / possible / helpful to shape policy response in Wales. The response to this specific request did not go into the level of detail we had asked, and I would be grateful if your officials could relook at the response provided and provide a more detailed response.