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Committee Clerk  
Children and Young People's Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

1<sup>st</sup> February 2012

**Subject: Children and Young People's Committee's Inquiry into Adoption**

Dear Ms Morris

NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Children and Young People's Committee's current inquiry into adoption in Wales.

The NSPCC strategy focuses on seven key priority themes, one of which is looked after children. Under the looked after children theme, the NSPCC is looking at solutions to reduce the incidence of abuse of looked after children both in care and when returned home and to minimise the harmful consequences of their experiences so they have the best possible life chances.

As part of this work, we have set up a service called "Connecting with Children in Care" which operates from our Service Centre in Swansea. The service seeks to increase access to independent help and emotional support for all looked after children, by providing short term support using a brief solution focused approach. Young people can access the service via ChildLine, by referring themselves or by referral from an agency with their consent. The service can be accessed independently if the young person is able to give informed consent, or with the support of an appropriate adult or carer. It is hoped that the service will give looked after children and young people greater choice and control about how they access timely and independent help when they most need it.

We are also following with interest current discussions in Wales around outcomes for looked after children and welcome the National Assembly for Wales' and the Welsh Government's commitment to improving the adoption process. It's critical that we provide our most vulnerable children and young people with the best possible future that enables them to thrive. We must now ensure that these reforms are driven by the child's experience of the adoption process, and we are pleased that the Committee is seeking views from children and young people who have been involved in the process.

We also need to remember that adoption only provides a future for a small minority of children in care. Returning home is the most common outcome (1,627 children ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2011. Of these 801 / 49% were returned to parents/relative) and greater focus is also needed on the repeated abuse or neglect children can face on their return. We need to improve planning so that children and their parents are provided with the support needed to make reunification successful.

Evidence from NSPCC Cymru/Wales  
We hope that the Committee will take the above issues into account when considering the evidence submitted as part of the inquiry and will be monitoring its conclusions with interest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mannion', written in a cursive style.

**Des Mannion**  
NSPCC National Head of Service - Wales