



ADSS Cymru

Yn arwain Gwasanaethau
Cymdeithasol yng Nghymru
Leading Social Services in Wales

Mared Llwyd
Ail Glerc, Y Pwyllgor Deisebau, Senedd Cymru
Second Clerk, Petitions Committee, Welsh Parliament

Dyddiad/Date: 18th May 2022

Dear Mared

All Wales Heads of Children's Services evidence to the Petitions Committee

This letter follows the evidence session of 24 April 2022. Many thanks once again for the opportunity to contribute to this important topic.

When we met with the Committee, we agreed to follow up in writing with:

1. The data from Swansea regarding the 380 care-experienced young people shared during the evidence session.
2. Case examples to inform the Committee's work including parents who have had the right support at the right time.
3. All Wales' Heads of Children's Services paper 'Children's services pressures'.
4. Focused breakdown of the Baby and Me service data on care experienced parents.
5. Submission to members of the Senedd regarding Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
6. Recommendations for Welsh Government regarding how corporate parenting could be strengthened and reforming children's services.

Given the sensitivity of item 4 and the correspondence at item 5, we request that this correspondence is not circulated any wider than the Committee.

1. The data from Swansea regarding the 380 care-experienced young people shared during the evidence session

As at 31 March 2022, Swansea had 380 care experienced young people. Of these, we are aware that 21 (5%) of the young people are parents and of these, 14 young people have their children remaining living with them.

From the cohort of care experienced parents, 5 were under 18 years of age at the point of birth (the youngest being 15) and 16 were aged 18-22 years.


2. Case examples to inform the Committee's work including parents who have had the right support at the right time

LA1	<p>Young person was 16 years old when she found out she was pregnant. It came as a shock to her and her 30-year-old boyfriend who had not planned on having a baby or ever really talked about being parents.</p> <p>She had experienced domestic abuse between her parents since she was 6 years old; at times she saw her Mother get injured by her Father and got caught in the cross fire as she tried to intervene. As she got older, she started to skip school and go missing from home. Often, she was travelling from Wales to England with adult males who had histories of criminal offences and would sexually exploit her in exchange for cocaine, MDMA (ecstasy) and vodka.</p> <p>When she was 15 years old, the young person became involved with a Barnardos Child Sexual Exploitation worker. They built up a strong and positive relationship where the young person was supported to learn about safety. Eventually this relationship proved to truly safeguard the young person. She trusted the worker enough to disclose that her Father was threatening to send her to Turkey to marry a family member because of her behaviour at home.</p> <p>A Forced Marriage Protection Order and Emergency Protection Order were granted by the court and the young person went to live with foster carers to keep her safe. Sadly, the young person really struggled with this move and was regularly absconding from her foster home and gravitating back home to her Mother. After a significant amount of support and intervention, it was assessed as safe for her to reside back at home with her Mother, while criminal orders prevented her Father from coming to the home.</p> <p>At 16 years old, the young person had a new relationship with a man 14 years older than her. Upon finding out they were expecting their first child, they were referred to the Baby and Me Service to support them to transition to parenthood and safely care for their baby. The parents attended the Baby Steps antenatal parenting programme, where they learnt all about the importance of early years, baby's brain development and how to read and respond to their baby's emotional needs. They loved the group environment and showed real excitement and investment in becoming parents.</p> <p>As the young person became increasingly attached to her unborn baby, her risk-taking behaviours lessened. She stopped taking hard drugs, got into healthy routines and always made sure she attended her midwifery appointments to know that her baby was doing ok. The change in lifestyle and attitudes meant that Social Workers felt confident that she and her partner could care for their baby with a package of support in place from Baby and Me. So when the baby was born in October 2021, both parents</p>
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	<p>were able to take her home....a huge achievement they worked incredibly hard for.</p> <p>The baby is thriving, showing reassuring signs that her parents have made her the centre of their world and are laying the foundations for healthy physical, social, emotional and cognitive outcomes.</p> <p>This story is so valuable because statistically the odds were stacked against her.</p>
LA 2	<p>(i) A 20yr old female, leading up to pregnancy was displaying concerning behaviours of a chaotic lifestyle, which included self-harm, alcohol abuse, as well as being in a domestic violent relationship. Referred during pregnancy, Public Law Outline commenced, but baby remained with parent placed in mother and baby foster placement voluntarily, completely placed the baby's needs before her own and those of the baby's father, attended practical parenting sessions, maintained supported from her personal adviser and health visitor, successfully transitioned back to her own accommodation, no involvement from Children's Services with the baby, baby is now almost 2 years old – known to Advocacy Service.</p> <p>(ii) 19 yr old female, historical issues of a chaotic lifestyle, including drug and alcohol abuse. Pregnancy monitored, no referral for services made. Successfully parenting, child now almost 5 years old – known to Advocacy Service</p>
LA 3	<p>S became a Child Looked After (CLA) due to offending behaviour, fuelled by addiction to substances. He entered the care system and then rehab as part of his longer-term pathway planning. On leaving rehab, he commenced a relationship with another CLA and they subsequently had a child together. After a period of assessment in a parent and child placement, they were able to take their child home. Although the child was subject to a care order initially, this order is now in the process of being revoked and the family remain living together with very minimal support.</p> <p>S had a personal advisor whilst he was a CLA and access to his Social Worker and YPA until age 21.</p> <p>S had access to a mentor and an advocate whilst we was in rehab. This was via the placement.</p> <p>S and his partner were supported by independent advocacy services when their unborn child was considered at Child Protection Conference.</p>
LA 4	<p>We had one case recently where the mum was a care leaver and the father of the baby was not involved. The community midwife referred the young woman into Jig-so and child and family social services at the same time, 10 weeks after conception. It was then taken over by our specialist midwife and an early allocation to parenting support. We were able to</p>

	<p>support the social worker's assessment and plan and target our work. We supported her to apply for a council house and claim the correct benefits before and after the birth. We had 30 weeks to work with this mum before the baby was due and we were able to deal with a lot of the worries, and reduce the risks, and share the parenting material with her. This early support helped us stabilise and evidence what was really happening and informed the social worker's assessment. We are coterminous with the child and family social workers and sharing this building space helps the coordination of services. One day after the birth, she went to a mother and baby foster placement, and we were able to continue our support and visit in the placement. Since her return, she now attends our parent and baby group and is meeting other young parents in a similar position and she is growing her support network. The baby is currently 7 months old and she is still working with us by accessing support from our groups. We had a pathway of support from -7 months to now, she had specialist midwife, nursery nurse support for care of the new born and 1-to-1 parenting support, and then group support. We have linked her up with her local children's centre and she is accessing this independently.</p> <p>Some of our care leavers do have advocates. If they do not, we advocate on their behalf. There is no specific advocacy team that we refer to, that is usually completed by the social worker. This is an area I would like to further develop.</p>
LA 5	<p>Young person in foster care with a plan to move to supported living. Young person became pregnant during the planning, and plan was changed to remain with foster carer under 'When I am ready' arrangements as it was acknowledged that the young person needed different and much more considerable support due to becoming a parent. Early help services – Resilient Families Service, become involved immediately and there has been no referral to children's services in relation to the baby. The young person did not wish to join our RCT Voices From Care group or take up advocacy.</p>



3. All Wales' Heads of Children's Services paper : Children's services pressures

<p>AWHOCS Children's Services Pressures Paper</p>	 <p>Children's Services Pressures 2022-23F</p>
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4. Focused breakdown of the Baby and Me service data on care-experienced parents.

This information will follow; an outline report is being prepared.

5. CAMHS Submission

AWHOCS Letter	 Lynne Neagle - Integrated Approach
WG Response	 JMSS1066121_Outg oing_0.pdf

6. Recommendations for Welsh Government regarding how corporate parenting could be strengthened and reforming children's services.

The Petitions Committee may decide to hear evidence from the following whose contributions would provide valuable insight:

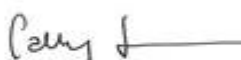
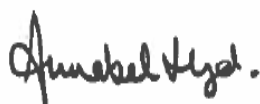
- Staff who work in the services outlined during our evidence including Jig-So, Baby and Me, Baby in Mind, and others. All Wales Heads of Children's Services meet next on 10th June and, should the Committee decide to do so, we could agree some plans for this at that meeting. It may be possible for some service-experienced parents to join this session.
- Local Health Boards and particularly, their midwifery services.
- Child and Adolescent Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS) Cymru.

If you have any issues or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Yours sincerely

Yours sincerely



Annabel Lloyd
Chair of AWHOCS/
Director of Children's Service

Sally Jenkins
Head of Children's Services
Newport Council

Julie Davies
Head of Child & Family Services
Swansea Council