

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 Penny Jones, Cynghorydd Sir | Evidence from Penny Jones, County Councillor

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

Early intervention and Prevention with an effective 'front door' policy. For this to have maximum effect it requires the required number of trained staff at all times. Therefore there must be the resources to attract, employ and maintain staff at the highest level - this will be cost effective in the long-term.

Priority 2

Encourage the involvement of family members and relatives and listen to the children and young people where possible. Too often the 'best solution' for the young person is not the one that suits their needs but are decisions made by legal professionals and the impact can be devastating.

Less reliance on the legal departments and better training throughout.

Priority 3

Flexibility to cater for the child's needs, less bureaucracy the use of Advocacy Services throughout the process if required. A child/young person must be supported from the start and likewise their families if relevant. Funding for these services is paramount.

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

Support for Care-Leavers until the age of 25yrs, if required.

P.As and other support services must be allocated to help prepare them for life after Foster Care.

It is vital to sustain an open and honest relationship and to help the young people navigate their journeys through Education, apprenticeships, work, housing, finance and coping with and building relationships. Unless handled properly these young people can slip through the net.

Funding for these posts are vital.

Priority 2

Involve care experienced children and young people in the decision making process. Have regular informal meetings with the decision makers and policy makers. Representatives can attend Council meetings and give a presentation - help members to understand their situation.

Get Young Care Leavers to meet the members of their Local Authority Corporate Parenting Panel and get them involved during informal meetings - get them to ask the questions., explain what is good for them and what could be changed for the better.

Priority 3

Events and Away Days are an important part of care - to show that care experienced children are not forgotten and to bring them together as a Group.

Likewise Foster Carers must be made to feel part of the decision making process and also to feel valued. Again with a LA event, hand written Christmas Cards etc. The amount they are paid is important but so too is the aftercare. More emphasis on on-going training for FCs is a must.

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

Main answers incorporated in previous section.

* Use Of PAs - to steer them through their journey - work, education, accommodation/housing, finances, relationships etc. A constant in their lives who is reliable and who cares.

*Support of the LA - Should have built a relationship with the young people through Corporate Parenting and listened to their needs - this should continue post care.

Priority 2

Training for Foster Carers to prepare young people for the next step when they leave their care. This includes all of the above - i.e the skills to cope with everyday living. This has been found wanting.

Priority 3

.Flexibility - understanding that not all young people have the same needs.

Anything else

Emphasis on the importance of providing the funding and opportunities to work with Children and Young People to help them to live their lives where and how they wish to, with the support they need.

More professional staff, more training and the fees to attract the care providers that will look after our young people. This will ultimately be cost effective but more importantly ensure that less children enter the Care system.