

Key Action Area 3

3. Supporting children who are looked after to have the best possible journeys through care and into adulthood.

This area of action is focused on giving children and young people clearly planned journeys through care and into adulthood which are aligned to the outcomes specified in their care and support plans and enable them to be reunited with family wherever possible.

The work strands under this area of action are set out below with a summary of key activity.

Work strand 1 - Improving the educational attainment of looked after children.

- In January 2016 the Welsh Government published their joint three year social services and education strategy 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales'.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/strategy-raising-the-ambitions-and-educational-attainment-of-children-who-are-looked-after-in-wales.pdf>

- The joint education strategy was developed in response to the recognised low educational attainment of looked after children. In particular it was informed by:
 - Welsh Government commissioned research from Cardiff University's Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) - <http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/research/research-projects/looked-after-children-and-education/>
 - Engagement with foster carers and children who are looked after, undertaken by the Fostering Network and Voices From Care. <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/uploads/pdf/educationreport.pdf>
- The strategy set out actions aimed at social services and education working together to drive up the educational performance of looked after children.
- The strategy concluded in January 2019. Strategy outcomes included publication of 'Making a difference – the designated person for looked after children in schools' and an accompanying training pack. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-11/making-a-difference-a-guide-for-the-designated-person-for-looked-after-children-in-schools.pdf>
- A working group of key stakeholders from education and social services has been established to set out the future education priorities for looked after children. This will be looking at the development of a whole system approach to improving attainment building on the virtual school heads model and the roll out of trauma informed training.

Work strand 2 - Ensuring corporate parenting responsibilities are acknowledged across public services.

- Local authorities have a duty under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to safeguard and promote the well-being of each child it looks after and promote the well-being of care leavers.
- To support elected members in their corporate parenting role, a guide for councillors “If this were my child A councillor’s guide to being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers.” was published in 2009, describing the responsibilities of local authorities towards care experienced children.
<https://gweddiill.gov.wales/docs/caecd/publications/090804ifthisweremychilden.pdf>
- The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services has agreed that work should commence to:
 - Extend corporate parenting duties to local authorities and health boards in Wales by strengthening Codes of Practice under Parts 6 and 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014;
 - Develop a ‘Corporate Parent Charter’ with and for other public services in Wales to adopt over the next 12 months;
 - Undertake a consultation which will include whether there is another more easily understood term than ‘corporate parent’ ;
 - Consider the feasibility of developing statutory guidance to other devolved and non-devolved public services, to allow an extension of corporate parenting responsibilities across wider public services, utilising powers already available under existing legislation such as the Children Act 2004 and the Education Act 2002.
- A Corporate Parenting Task and Finish Group has been established to take forward this work.

Work Strand 3 – Ensuring a wide range of therapeutic support is available for emotional and behavioural problems experienced by children and young people on the edge of care and for adopted children

- The National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee ‘Care experienced children and young people’ report published in November 2018 highlighted that care experienced children need appropriate emotional and mental health support.
<http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11857/cr-ld11857-e.pdf>
- The Together for Children and Young People Programme (T4CYP) was launched in 2015 to improve the emotional and mental health services for children and young people in Wales - <https://www.goodpractice.wales/t4cyp>

- T4CYP has a work stream to develop a model and framework for Early Help and Enhanced Support. The workstream aims to deliver proposals for best practice and service development to deliver targeted support and interventions to those most at risk of developing emotional and mental health problems or showing early signs of mental disorders.
- To support this work NSPCC and Voices from Care Cymru have undertaken a survey and report, *Listen, Act, Thrive*, about the effectiveness of assessment and support for mental health provided to care experienced children - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/policy/listenactthrive.pdf>

Work Strand 4 - Examining the range of accommodation options available for care leavers.

- The Part 6 Code of Practice to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out that local authorities planning for care leavers to transition towards independence must involve a measure evidence-based analysis of the young person's continuing need for accommodation and care and support.
- In 2016 the Welsh Government published the 'Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood Supporting young people on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention'.
<https://gweddill.gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/161019-positive-pathway-en.pdf>
- Alongside this 'Positive Pathway' document, there is a 'sister' version which Barnardo's developed specifically for young people leaving care in Wales. The 'Care Leaver Accommodation and Support framework'.
http://www.barnardos.org.uk/16905_su_care_leavers_accom_and_support_framework_english_digital_3.pdf
- In October 2018 the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) published Welsh Government commissioned research into the causes and prevention of youth homelessness. This included a specific research paper on 'Youth homelessness and care leavers: Mapping interventions in Wales'.
<https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/preventing-youth-homelessness/>
- Work is underway to examine appropriate accommodations options for young people leaving care. End Youth Homelessness Cymru, a partnership of five homelessness organisations in Wales, has a sub group focusing on links between homelessness and the care system which has developed proposals and actions to take forward.

- An Accommodation Options Task & Finish Group has also been established to examine the range of existing accommodation and support options available for looked after children and care leavers between the ages of 16-24 and mapping existing sufficiency of provision