

## Key Action Area 2

### 2. Having sufficient, high quality placement options for children who are looked after or leaving care.

This area of action is focused on providing and commissioning a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality placements for children who are looked after, to meet their diverse needs and circumstances.

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

#### Work strand 1 – Improving sufficiency, choice and quality of placements for looked after children.

- Local authorities have a duty under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to take steps to ensure they have sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of the children they look after.
- The need for a strategic approach to commissioning these placements has been highlighted in the Care Crisis Review ([https://www.frq.org.uk/images/Care\\_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf](https://www.frq.org.uk/images/Care_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf)) and the National Assembly for Wales' Public Accounts Committees Inquiry of Care Experienced Children and Young People (November 2018) – <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s81096/Committee%20Report%20-%20Care%20experienced%20children%20and%20young%20people%20-%20November%202018.pdf>
- A Project Steering Group has been set up to scope what a national approach to placement commissioning might look like and to inform the development of a shared approach to placement commissioning.
- Research has been commissioned to collate evidence on placement patterns within local authorities, pressures on placement availability and costs, drivers behind high placement costs and value for money and the impact of commissioning decisions on outcomes for children.

#### Work strand 2 - Implementing the National Fostering Framework.

- The National Fostering Framework has been developed to help ensure there are sufficient good quality, well supported foster placements to meet an increasing need for foster placements in Wales. The Framework seeks to deliver transformational change in the way foster carers are recruited, retained, supported, respected and remunerated.
- As well as increasing the overall number of foster placements, the Framework has been seeking to rebalance the sector towards local authority fostering in line with Welsh Government policy and reduce the overall cost of placements.

- The National Fostering Framework is now in its third phase and in 2018-19 work started on creating an all-Wales brand for local authority fostering, and establishing a marketing strategy in support of the brand, to support local authorities with their local recruitment and retention strategies. The emphasis has been on regional working supported at the national level where appropriate.
- Links to National Fostering Framework reports are below –

[https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/uploads/pdf/nff\\_phase\\_one\\_report\\_1.pdf](https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/uploads/pdf/nff_phase_one_report_1.pdf)

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/content/nffcomsbulletin2.pdf>

Work strand 3 - Further develop the ability of the National Adoption Service for Wales to meet the need for placements and develop a model of adoption support.

- The National Adoption Service for Wales is an innovative collaborative for the provision of adoption services. It brings together Welsh local authority adoption services into a three tier structure which includes partnerships at all levels with Voluntary Adoption Agencies based in Wales, Health and Education Services as well as others.

<https://www.adoptcymru.com/about-nas>

- Adopted children can have additional needs and many adoptive families benefit from help and advice at different stages in their family life. Difficulties can arise from early experiences which influence a child's behaviour at home or at school or there may be some aspects of being an adoptive family which other families don't experience. For example adopted children often need help to understand their past, or may want to find out more about their birth family or contact arrangements.
- To meet the needs of adopted children and their families the National Adoption Service for Wales has developed a Framework for Adoption Support. This Framework sets out their ambition to improve how adoptive families in Wales are supported and make it easier for the right help to be available when it is needed. Their current version of the Framework is available [here](#).
- To help improve adoption support across Wales in line with the National Adoption Support Framework £2.3m funding has been provided to local authorities in 2019/20.

- This additional new funding will allow local authorities to allocate additional resources to strengthen and enhance the existing support services for adopters, children and young people improving outcomes for children and build resilient adoptive families. They will also be able to strengthen the support “offer” being made to potential adopters for those children whose needs make them the most difficult to place with an adoptive family, and who consequently wait the longest to leave care through adoption.
- Complementing the additional funding there is ongoing implementation of the new Adoption Register for Wales. This will speed up matching of children including quicker notification to the Register of all children and approved adopters in line with revised regulations (one month).

Work strand 4 - Develop a co-ordinated approach to improving placement options and outcomes for children and young people in residential care and secure accommodation.

- The Residential Care Task and Finish Group was established in January 2017 to take forward action to improve outcomes for looked after children in residential care. In this context, ‘residential care’ refers to children’s homes and secure accommodation.
- Membership of the Task and Finish Group consists of key stakeholders with an interest in residential accommodation for looked after children and young people in Wales.
- The work of the group since inception has been informed by a range of research and reports in this area including:
  - The Children’s Commissioner’s report, ‘The Right Care: Children’s rights in residential care in Wales’ (June 2016), which presented the experiences of children and young people living in residential care placements.

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publication/right-care-childrens-rights-residential-care-wales/>

- The Care Council for Wales’ report, ‘Residential Care in Wales: the characteristics of children and young people placed in residential settings’ (June 2016), provided the first comprehensive profile of the children placed in residential care, including children’s homes.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13575279.2017.1319798>

- Lord Laming’s report for the Prison Reform Trust, ‘In Care, Out of Trouble’ (May 2016) reviewed the reasons why care experienced children and young people are over-represented in the criminal justice system, including those placed in residential settings.

<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/In%20care%20out%20of%20trouble%20summary.pdf>

- The Task and Finish Group have commissioned and disseminated work on improved data collection, models of residential care, out of area/cross-border placements and remand PACE places.
- The Group is developing and delivering an Implementation Plan to take forward further work to improve outcomes for children in residential care following up work from the commissioned reports.
- Complementing the work and aims of the Residential Care Task and Finish Group Regional Partnership Boards can bid for Integrated Care Fund capital and revenue funding to support development of new approaches in residential care which will link with the development of a national approach to placement commissioning.
- The work of the group will also be informed by the Social Care Wales commissioned research undertaken by CASCADE on journeys in and out of secure accommodation for children on secure welfare orders. This will support the work to develop the national approach to placement commissioning.

[The experiences and outcomes of children and young people from Wales receiving Secure Accommodation Orders - Summary](#)

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