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Consultation – summary of responses

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales

Date of issue: **December 2015**

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales

Audience	Local authorities; headteachers and governing bodies of maintained schools; headteachers and governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools; teachers in charge of pupil referral units; church diocesan authorities; proprietors of independent schools; principals of further education institutions; school staff unions; Governors Wales; Careers Wales; higher education authorities and directors of social services; heads of children's services and social workers. It should also be read by staff within those organisations with responsibility for looked after children, care leavers, fostering and adoption and third sector organisations whose work helps support children.
Overview	The Welsh Government issued a consultation on proposals for a strategy on 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales'. The consultation ran from 29 January 2015 to 4 May 2015. The strategy has been developed based on the results of that consultation, and further evidence gathered on how to effectively support children who are looked after in education.
Action required	To contribute to the implementation of the strategy, and associated action plan.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Supporting Achievement and Safeguarding Team Support for Learners Division Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support Directorate Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ Tel: 029 2082 3344 e-mail: LACstrategy@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.gov.wales/consultations
Related documents	See Annex.

Contents

Abbreviations used

ALN: additional learning needs
CAMHS: child and adolescent mental health services
CYPE: children and young people' education (committee)
FE: further education
HE: higher education
LAC: looked after children
LACE: looked after children education
PDG: pupil deprivation grant
SEN: special educational needs

Introduction

The Welsh Government issued a consultation on proposals for a strategy on 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales'. The consultation ran from January 29th to May 4th 2015. The consultation was conducted electronically and was drawn to the attention of schools, local authorities, voluntary organisations, Governors Wales, teacher and support staff unions, colleges and universities.

A total of 77 responses were received of which nine represented the views of 46 young people.

Of the 68 non young people responses:

- 1 was a Headteacher/principal
- 7 were school governors
- 18 were from local authorities
- 2 were from teaching and support staff unions
- 24 were from national and professional bodies
- 14 were local, regional or private responses including health board staff, colleges and universities, private sector providers and individuals
- 1 was a member of the public
- 1 did not say what he/she did.

Overview of young people's consultation responses

Nine young people's organisations responded to the consultation, resulting in responses from forty-six young people. Not all the young people responded to all the questions.

Question 1

Do you think these changes will help make sure there is strong leadership and help everyone understand their roles and responsibilities?

Yes	No	Don't know
35	0	11
76%	0%	24%

The majority of respondents agreed. The young people's main concerns were around having 'more consistency', and having a 'dedicated' and accessible person to support them who is not setting specific, but remains accessible when they move schools.

Specific comments included:

Within school:

- They will have more consistency in the person they see, so they don't have to see a different person every time.
- Would help looked after children if they knew who they could go to in school to talk to.
- Should be a governor who's responsible for LAC.
- Dedicated person to work/support those who are looked after.

Moving between schools:

- Need stable people if they keep moving schools.
- We would like someone to talk to in school, especially if new to the school.
- Teachers in our school aren't easy to talk to.

Improved understanding of needs:
- More support as young people are judged for being in care.
- Make sure goals are met and helped to be met.
- Foster carers need support to understand education

Question 2

Do you think these changes will help make sure we have better partnerships and work together better?

Yes	No	Don't know
41	3	1
91%	7%	2%

The majority of respondents agreed, although some concerns about adequate funding were raised. Some thought that working together might save both time and, potentially, money. Some hoped that better partnerships might result in some new projects in schools.

Specific comments included:

How partnerships can help:

- Everybody will figure things out at the same time.
- Easier to work together – might save money.

What partnership should address:

- LAC have more problems with bullying in schools.
- We need ... projects to help looked after children catch up on school work and come into schools to work with young people.

But...

- Wouldn't want to share it with people we had just met.
- Needs to be funded as well.

Question 3

Do you think these changes will help make sure there is good strong teaching and learning that works?

Yes	No	Don't know
38	7	0
85%	15%	0%

The majority of respondents agreed. Some of the comments paint a less than perfect picture of the current relationships between some teachers and looked after children and hopes were expressed that the changes would bring about more training for teachers.

Specific comments included:

More supportive learning environment:

- Teachers have class of 30+ to support, need extra support in classes and support to ensure bullying for kids in care is tackled.
- Teachers don't care enough about personal issues at the moment – need more training.
- Teachers need special training to support looked after children.
- Teachers don't respect young people.
- Conflict management – cameras in classroom.

Better information shared in school and at transition:

- Teachers and support staff need to be made aware of circumstances and trained in how to support us.
- Sharing information can provide extra support with school and college changes.
- Inset days in college is a good thing so children will get used to it.

Question 4

Do you think these changes will help us make better use of the information we have?

Yes	No	Don't know
34	0	12
74%	0%	26%

While most respondents agreed and some young people positively welcomed the changes, specific concerns were raised about confidentiality, reluctance to have personal information shared and any potential embarrassment or upset this may cause.

Specific comments included:

Feeling included:

- Young people are getting a choice in what's done.

- Listening to care leavers' experiences is an excellent idea!

Sharing information can help:

- Share info instead of getting new info.
- All services need to work together so we don't have to repeat ourselves all the time about our needs and circumstances.
- Might get them upset 'thinking about the past'.
- Some young people may not want to talk about their experiences. They may be embarrassed to talk to teachers etc.

But .....

- Not all children want their info shared.

Question 5

Do you think these changes will help us to support the education of children who are looked after?

Yes	No	Don't know
33	9	3
73%	20%	7%

Most respondents agreed. Some felt that the money that is currently available is not always put to best use and some suggested that the money should follow the young person and be used for specific purposes, even if the young person's circumstances change - if, for instance, they are adopted.

Specific comments included:

Money that follows the child:

- So everybody gets an equal chance.
- Money funds should be linked to the young person so it's spent helping them.
- Children might still need support after they are adopted.

Using money more effectively:

- Schools already have enough money to invest but they spend it on the wrong things.
- More money to be used better.
- It should be given to the school to pay for trips and uniforms.

- Care givers are given money to help already. Agree there should be more money for people in poverty if they live with family or have been adopted.

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Question 6

Do you think these changes will help us involve more children who are looked after in all our plans?

Yes	No	Don't know
42	1	2
93%	2%	4%

Nearly all respondents agreed and were positive about young people being more involved. A few concerns were raised however, about what happens when a young person moves home, and also whether some young people would seek more involvement if it meant that their personal lives would be under scrutiny.

Specific comments included:

- So they get to see the plan and get involved.
- Can hear first-hand how they are being treated.

Consistency:

- It's too dependent on where you live. If you move the involvement stops.

Sensitivity to individuals:

- Some children might not know they are adopted – or want to talk about it.
- Important to involve children- if they want to be involved – some felt these things are private.

Question 7

Do you think we've left anything important out of these plans for a new plan?

Yes	No	Don't know
4	23	11
11%	60%	29%

Most respondents were happy that most of the points important to them had been covered. About one third said they did not know. Although four young people responded that they thought something important had been left out, they left no comments to indicate what this might be. There was only one comment, and that was that the above measures 'should apply to all children'.

Overview of other consultation responses

Sixty-eight individuals and/or organisations responded to the consultation. Of these, forty-eight used the response form, but not all respondents answered all the questions. Ten respondents did not use the response form and so did not specifically answer 'yes', 'no' or 'not sure', but responded via email, commenting on their own specific area of expertise. The tables which follow, therefore, show the responses of the majority of respondents, the forty-eight who used the response form and the percentages shown are of those who responded to the closed question, rather than of all responses[1].

There was a large number of comments on the consultation. Respondents commented on most questions, reflecting the enormous interest that this consultation has raised.

Question 1

Does the Introduction provide clear, useful information on why this consultation is being undertaken? Could it be improved?

Yes	No	Not sure
36	3	6
80%	7%	13%

Overview of responses:

Respondents agreed that the introduction provided clear and useful information. Comments suggested that additional information around categories of need or characteristics should be referred to in the introduction. These included children and young people in the youth justice system, LAC moving between England and Wales and the need for legislation to cover a broader age range, up to age 25.

Specific comments included

- "It could be improved by taking into account the diversity of locations that LAC children from Wales end up, and the mix of LAC children who end up in Wales." (LACE Coordinator)
- "The emphasis on the need for effective joint working between education services, social care and other external partners is particularly important.Paragraph 10 makes the point that 'all parts of the system around children who are looked after need to act in a coordinated and coherent fashion.' This is key." (Estyn)

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[1] Percentages have been rounded up so may sometimes add up to 99 or 101

Question 2

Does Chapter 1 clearly identify the statutory duties and guidance that apply directly to children who are looked after? If not, how could this information be improved upon?

Yes	No	Not sure
29	12	3
66%	27%	7%

Most respondents responded positively to the question although there was criticism of the way some of the data was presented, which it was felt was not always clear. The chapter was described as providing a useful overview of guidance and legislation, although some felt that reference to non-education areas of legislation that affect LAC and impact on their education should also be included. There was also a call for greater clarification between guidance and statutory duties. For example, a governor who answered 'No' to the question felt that the chapter would benefit from a bullet point list of the relevant statutory responsibilities for each service provider.

A representative from Fostering Network reflected a common view that the rationale for low attainment among LAC focussed too much on interrupted schooling and not enough on the negative effects of the public care system, including the instability of placements, low ambitions within the system, the low educational attainment of foster carers and a lack of remedial help.

Other comments related to the need for guidance to be much more explicit about the roles, responsibilities and expectations of service providers, and particularly local authority based personnel; the need for guidance on better information sharing between local authorities hosting and placing looked after children; and the importance of including further and higher education institutions in the process.

Specific comments included:

- As the consultation document highlights, there are a number of policies and initiatives that are either underway already or in development which will play a vital role in ensuring that outcomes for looked after children improve. These policies and initiatives sit in a number of departments in both Welsh Government and in local authorities making a joined up approach to services for looked after children crucial. (WLGA)
- The chapter makes explicit reference to key sections of the legislative underpinning relating to looked after children but there are some gaps and omissions...... It is important to work within a framework that focuses on the holistic needs of looked after children and young people and that their educational attainment is inextricably linked with all the other significant aspects of their lives. (Care Council for Wales).

- There could be some analysis about why these statutory duties and guidance have resulted in slow progress and why there is still a need for more to be done, for example were the duties and guidance being appropriately and robustly implemented. (Voices from Care)

Question 3

Does Chapter 1 explain the range of circumstances which can impact upon the life of a child who is looked after and the resultant impact that these circumstances can have on educational attainment? If not, how could the chapter be improved?

Yes	No	Not sure
14	23	6
33%	53%	14%

Over half of respondents felt that Chapter 1 did not explain the range of circumstances which can impact upon the life of LAC. Several comments indicate that this is due to the complexity of these circumstances not being recognised. In particular, the need to identify differences between the types of LAC was raised. The chapter was described as providing a useful 'state of the nation' summary but:

The document does not explore clearly enough what causes LAC to underperform. In order to improve this chapter, a clear explanation of the circumstances needs to be given. The explanation needs to be linked to the wellbeing agenda – pupils who are unhappy, anxious, or have difficulty forming relationships (partly due to moving schools) are unlikely to perform well. (Estyn)

Another respondent commented:

There are no specific references to background issues affecting LAC. For example, 48% will have come from backgrounds where the parent/s have learning disabilities and 37% where there is a history of parental substance or alcohol abuse. Furthermore, just under 30% of LAC have mental health problems, 76% of these are aged 10 -17 years. (source: Children in Need Census, February 2015).

Similar points were made by a number of local authority staff. There were also comments about the roles of foster carers and a school governor suggested that *"not all foster carers take on board or have the ability to assist with school work"* and that, consequently, the use of mentors should be explored. Four respondents referred to the long-term impacts of circumstances affecting some LAC not being sufficiently well recognised.

Other specific comments on the chapter included:

- It does not seem to state the different types of LAC children – nor does it look at adopted children
- Case studies would have a greater impact and make it clearer to the reader
- Chapter 1 primarily provides a range of data concerning looked after children. It does not set out to explain the data

Question 4

Does the narrative in Chapter 2 on the case for change provide a clear message on why additional emphasis needs to be given to the educational attainment of children who are looked after? If not, how could these messages be improved?

Yes	No	Not sure
28	15	1
64%	34%	2%

Most respondents answered 'Yes' to the question. Comments suggest that small adaptations could make this message easier to translate into practice – for example, Estyn cited the potential unsuitability of the CSI as a measurement of LAC's educational progress in light of the high incidence of ALN and of attendance in special schools.

The recognition of the role that voluntary sector partners can play in raising educational attainment was welcomed.

Nearly a third of participants answered 'No' to this question. Voices From Care felt that a lack of reflection on the long term impacts of poor attainment for LAC, particularly for care leavers, diluted the potential strength of the message around the need to improve. The South East Wales Reaching Wider partnership response stated that a focus on targets did not address the poor valuing of education, something that LAC may share with learners facing other barriers.

Specific comments included:

- The information provided is very informative and comprehensive. We welcome the reference to the unacceptable levels of young people who are NEET.
- It is... not surprising given the circumstances that affect Looked After Children, why they do not achieve to the same levels as other pupils who are not Looked After and this comparison is not always helpful

- The Education system needs to look at this 'for all', it is not just for those who are looked after. Those from disadvantaged background can face similar barriers.
- It needs to be recognised that the cohort of LAC pupils are not the same all the way through the educational system and that this changes.

Question 5

Is the information provided in Chapter 3 clear and helpful? If not, how could it be improved?

Yes	No	Not sure
29	6	6
70%	15%	15%

Most respondents agreed that the information provided in chapter three was helpful. Comments supporting the clarity and helpfulness of the chapter refer to its depiction of funding sources such as the Pupil Deprivation Grant, as well as statutory and policy changes, such as the reform of the statutory framework for SEN and Individual Development Plans. Estyn welcomed the range of provision being proposed to support stability of placements.

Specific comments included:

- Very informative about future changes regarding IDP and PEPS also Pupil Deprivation Grant increases and extension of allocation to 3 and 4 year olds.
- Whilst it sets the provision in place for looked after children who are making the transition from school to Further Education, there is no appraisal of the challenges and how these may be addressed.
- The Chapter talks about what's in place; is it enforced? LEAs operate differently and we know that not all authorities are aware of / or adhere to these processes.

Six respondents answered 'No'. Among their comments were suggestions that the chapter should include more reflection on the potential impact that the work described may have on outcomes, as well as a reflection on the extent to which this work is being implemented in practice. The South East Wales Reaching Wider Partnership noted that some of the information was unclear regarding potential measurements and standards, and that there is a variance in how local authorities enforce the types of practice outlined in the chapter.

Question 6

Are the themes identified in Chapter 4 a fair reflection of where future action needs to be focused? Please suggest specific actions within these themes which you think might help strengthen current arrangements, focusing on the contribution that your organisation might make?

A.   Effective leadership – roles and responsibilities

Yes	No	Not sure
23	7	11
56%	17%	27%

Just over half of the respondents agreed with the proposals around the theme of effective leadership. Of those responding in this way, most felt that leadership and responsibilities within local authorities, schools, colleges and other institutions working with LAC should be clearly defined so that all partners, within what was described as a very complex service structure, know who is leading on decision making. Four LACE coordinators cited the potential weakness of an approach which outlines leadership but does not clearly define roles, statutory responsibilities and lines of accountability. One stated that understanding of LAC within consortia and schools is poor, and there must be clearer enforcement of the need to respond to this.

Seven respondents disagreed with the proposals. This was based on feelings that the current structures of provision are overly complex and therefore may lead to delays and even mismanagement. The importance of there being an identified person within education consortia to work with a lead LAC governor and LACE coordinator was raised, as was the importance of having LAC leads in further education.

Eleven respondents answered 'Don't know' in relation to the question. Of these, one governor felt that more consideration should be given to good practice outside of Wales to determine what might constitute good practice. Another governor suggested that training should be made available to governors with an interest in the subject, as governors can act as champions within schools.

Specific comments included:

- We love the idea of ambitious and alternative approaches to CLA education "Don't try harder, try differently."
- I have very real concerns that there are far too many layers of leadership/agencies involved in care of these children and this often leads to ineffective delivery of services and poor/complex methods of communication

- Why mention regional consortium but then not put anything in narrative that explains their role? There is no one in our consortium who knows, understands or has experience of LAC.

B.   Building effective partnerships and collaboration

Yes	No	Not sure
29	6	4
74%	15%	10%

Most respondents agreed with the proposals. Comments reflected the necessity of involving a range of agencies, but with caution regarding these agencies' ability to collaborate effectively without adequate support. Estyn highlighted the lack of reference to the Youth Engagement and Participation framework, an omission also highlighted by the WLGA.

Six respondents disagreed with the proposals. A LACE coordinator felt that the guidance on partnerships was vague and missed out a number of key potential partners, most notably health. Other LACE coordinators commented on the Welsh Government's previous provision of a staff member to liaise with local authorities and how this had supported partnership development.

Four respondents answered 'Don't know'. The Care Council felt that the refreshed strategy offered a great opportunity for embedding partnership across a wide range of agencies, including health and the Children's Commissioner's role, but that this was not given sufficient attention.

Most governors commented on the complexity of the current system.

Specific comments included:

- Effective transition planning across agencies should be highlighted to support young people who are looked after move into education, employment and training post 16.
- The role of other departments, beyond social services and education, and which include transport and housing are key and form part or the holistic corporate responsibility we would wish to promote.
- Leaving care and LAC teams should work together to minimise disruption at GCSE exam time. This could be done by postponing the move over to the leaving care team until completion of GCSE exams.

C. Effective teaching and learning

Yes	No	Not sure
29	4	8
71%	10%	20%

Most participants answered 'Yes' to the question.

There was support for extra-curricula activities such as homework clubs for LAC and a suggestion that the Educational Achievement Services should play a greater role in sharing practice.

One governor with responsibility for ALN in a primary school felt that reform of the statutory framework for ALN would have a negative impact on children with LAC, particularly as *"a corporate parent will not fight for them in the same way as a biological parent".*

The role of the Virtual School Head is both supported and challenged in the comments. One school governor sees this as a potential lead figure to ensure greater partnership working. However, some LACE coordinators saw overlaps with their role. Rather than consolidate this role, they felt that engagement with other partners outside of education would be more valuable.

Specific comments include:

- Whilst we would agree that effective teaching and learning are important to looked after children's experience of education, more emphasis here needs to be on how the consortia will support schools in these roles.
- Emphasis should be on ensuring training of staff on the classroom floor, rather than just the LAC link person.
- More work needs to be done with children who are looked after to prepare them for the differences between school/FE/HE. And more needs to be down by FE/HE to help LAC.
- Avoidance of multi agency squabbles is key to allow a 'normal' school education to be effective.

D. Making better use of and strengthening the knowledge and information held about children who are looked after

Yes	No	Not sure
24	8	8
60%	20%	20%

Most respondents agreed with the proposals set out and all the comments agreed on the need to have better data and to use that data more effectively. Comments also focused on the need to ensure that the voice of the child or young person is listened to and included in planning.

The need to develop more effective data sharing mechanisms between settings, counties and across borders was emphasised, as was ensuring that data is up to date.

Specific comments included:

- We propose a national data base which could track the children and better safeguard them. In an ideal world the IDP or PEP could be uploaded to this system via the unique pupil number and the UPN could also be used to record and flag up other issues e.g. attendance. This would provide instant access to important information which could be used by the new school to support the child and maybe could be accessed by the ESW.
- This proposed system would save money and time as re referrals would not need to be actioned from scratch and would also free up valuable social worker and administration resources.
- There needs to be a mechanism to align the data collection with Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and the census at WG level.
- As the strategy notes, higher education institutions collate their own data on the number of care leavers in higher education, but a reliable dataset which is linked in with local authorities and owned by Welsh Government would be much more accurate in establishing the number of care leavers in higher education.

E. Strengthening funding arrangements to support the education of children who are looked after

Yes	No	Not sure
19	9	11
49%	23%	28%

Only half of the respondents agreed with the proposals around strengthening funding arrangements, although others were more likely to tick that they did not know than to disagree. Most of the comments related to the shifting of responsibilities from local authorities to consortia and how this would work in practice. Respondents were keen that there was consistency across Wales in the way that funding is allocated and that processes for identifying support for LAC living outside consortia areas, but for whom the local authority is the corporate parent, where clear and transparent.

Specific comments included:

- Following recent changes, there is now a real opportunity for regional education consortia to take a more holistic approach to strategic resource allocation which benefits whole populations of LAC, and adopted children within their region.
- Given that accountability for improved outcomes will rest with Consortia, we would expect education consortia to provide a clear steer to schools in relation to how the PDG can be utilised more strategically and holistically to best improve the outcomes of all LAC in the school.
- PDG should be extended to FE to enable a smoother transition and progression to HE.

F. Participation of children who are looked after to inform strategic approaches and operational decision making

Yes	No	Not sure
32	3	7
76%	7%	17%

There was strong agreement with the proposals on children and young people's participation in informing strategic approaches and decision making and those who did not agree were likely to be unsure.

The comments focused on how participation would be achieved, and how it would be used. There was a view that people recognised the need and the importance of involving young people but were concerned that it was done effectively.

Specific comments included:

- The mechanisms for participation need to reflect the range of the LAC population. Professionals need to be creative in order to provide a way for every voice to be heard, particularly for disengaged young people.
- It would be good if the participation was meaningful and inclusive rather than tokenistic.
- There are training Issues for staff as all children require a voice and all children should be consulted with. Extra effort and skill is required to engage and support vulnerable learners. What standard is expected? What are the desired outcomes? Who monitors it? How well do schools secure the voice of the children in planning and what is the interface with PCP?
- Children do tell us of their experiences – but do we listen, does anything change for them?

Question 7

Do you think that actions should be considered under any other themes not addressed in the consultation document? If so, what might these be, with a rationale of the benefits?

Yes	No	Not sure
17	13	8
45%	34%	21%

Responses to the questions were split. Thirteen respondents felt that additional themes were not necessary, as they felt that those included were appropriate and gave substantial scope. Others suggested an additional focus on the following themes:

- greater engagement with health, and specifically mental health services
- Utilising measures of effectiveness other than educational attainment, and in particular measuring emotional wellbeing and development.

In their comments, LACE coordinators all refer to CAMHS as essential partners, and to mental health as requiring its own theme. There was a twin emphasis on raising the importance of education amongst partner agencies, and of supporting education to understand the broader needs of children and young people. Using person

centred planning approaches was seen to be valuable here as was including the voice of LAC and carers in decision making processes.

The importance of issues created by cross border and cross school moves, especially around different syllabuses and exam boards, was also raised.

Selected comments include:

- There is a need to integrate these initiatives with services which provide emotional and mental health support to this cohort of children and young people is essential if the full benefits of the education system are to be accessible to them.
- A recurring theme is the omission of health and post 16 providers. They are key stakeholders and their omission from this process is a significant concern.
- There needs to be thought about the way in which achievement is measured – often the more challenging pupils make massive improvements, but have not managed to achieve a GCSE, so are judged as failures.

Question 8

Chapter 4 has set out a number of specific actions aimed at different partners. These are set out in paragraphs 4.09–4.58. With reference to the specific paragraph number do you have any views on the practicality and benefit of the proposed actions, and particularly where your organisation might make a benefit to implementation?

Yes	No	Not sure
34	6	6
74%	13%	13%

Most respondents to this question answered 'Yes'. Among the views represented, in relation to leadership roles, including the role of the Virtual School Head, respondents felt that prior experience in relation to LAC was essential. In relation to teachers and LACE coordinators, several respondents felt that additional sharing of information would assist them in fulfilling their roles effectively. In addition, specific training for teachers might offer greater opportunities for them to facilitate good learning outcomes for LAC.

Amongst LACE coordinators responding to the question, there was some scepticism about the role of the Virtual School Head. One LACE coordinator felt that this role would only work if well understood in relation to the school's senior management team, while another highlighted to potentially large cost implications. Three LACE

coordinators proposed stronger statutory guidance about roles and responsibilities within the local authority.

Specific comments include:

- Children who are adopted often have the same difficulties and issues as CLA. These can continue for many years and funding should be available throughout the school life of the child. More support should also be given to adoptive parents.
- There is a time lapse between funding and data collection.
- Materials alone are not sufficient and information and guidance on engaging with education from primary through to HE should be a compulsory part of foster carer CPD.
- There needs to be greater emphasis on foster carers, they are central to supporting better outcomes for LAC but are not in my view mentioned enough throughout the document. Their role needs to be promoted and they too need to be more accountable for outcomes.

Question 9

Do you think that any of the actions set out in paragraphs 4.09–4.58 should not be implemented? If so, what is the justification for not doing so?

Yes	No	Not sure
9	20	6
26%	57%	17%

Most responding to this question did not feel that any of the actions should not be implemented, but a quarter of respondents did have reservations. Many of the comments focused on the need to sharpen up the actions, fearing that implementation would be weakened by the aspirational nature of some of the proposals. The need for proposals to be target driven with strong guidance on how they should be implemented was raised as well as the need to strengthen Estyn's role in this area.

There was common support for the research proposed in para. 4.54, although it was pointed out that it was important to explore the experiences of LAC that had done well in the education system and learn from their experiences as well. Concerns were raised around the likely cost of the Virtual School Head role and where the money for it would come from. More generally there was a view that proposals needed to be costed amid a concern that changes may be expected to be absorbed within current workloads.

Specific comments included:

- 4.56 I agree that funding should be utilised to provide targeted support to adopted children/young people on an SGO, however there needs to be an appreciation that it will spread the pot more thinly and have a potential impact on LAC outcomes.
- I would be interested in hearing how the Welsh Government intends to measure and evidence impact with regards to adopted children as we do not hold data on this group.
- There are 26 actions. All the actions lack focus and clarity. It is unclear where the evidence to support the prioritisation of these actions has come from or how they differ from the existing guidance available.

Question 10

The conclusion of the consultation document states that the Welsh Government's strategy will establish a national aspiration for the educational outcomes for children who are looked after and considerable progress in the attainment for children who are looked after in all key stages. Do you think that is a reasonable aspiration? If so, what are your views on what a national target might be, with a rationale for your views?

Yes	No	Not sure
22	2	12
61%	6%	33%

The majority of respondents agreed that the strategy provides a reasonable aspiration for looked after children, although a third said that they were not sure. The comments were divided pretty evenly between the need to move on from aspirations to targets, timescales and methods of how to achieve them; and those that focused on capturing the needs and progress of the individual child and moving away from standardised targets, such as GCSE results, to a greater recognition of distance travelled.

Specific comments include:

- We recognise that for some looked after children, care leavers, and their carers, higher education might seem like too great a step to aspire to. However, in committing to a strategy to raise the ambitions and educational attainment for children who are looked after in Wales we would encourage the Welsh Government and its partners to recognise fully the contribution that our universities can make.
- We fully endorse this, but it should be focused on the distance travelled for each child, not on aggregated targets. This relies on good social work

assessment of individual children and effective reviews. It is information from these that should be fed into monitoring. Currently, this would present a significant logistical challenge to local authorities, but it is one they must address.

- It is not only 'reasonable', it is essential for the well-being of children and of Welsh society. The national target should focus on narrowing the gap at GCSE. There is little point in using non-validated teacher assessments in KSs 2-3. KS 2 and 3 teacher assessments are not robustly, and rigorously, authenticated and validated. As your own data in para. 1.11 shows, they bear little relationship to subsequent attainment at externally verified GCSE level.

Question 11

Twenty-one respondents left comments in response to question 11 - 'We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them'.

Many of the comments focused on the role of foster carers and how this could be supported to better impact on educational attainment, and on ensuring that health and social care services have minimum disruption on education.
The approach set out in the consultation was seen as an opportunity to join up policies around educational attainment and inclusion, school improvement, family support, health and well-being.

There were calls for more detail on how regional consortia could act to improve attainment of LAC and for a focus on teacher training in issues that impact on LAC. The need for the strategy to take into account the full range of needs, from the child who refuses to go to school, through improving school outcomes, to the university student who has nowhere to go in the holidays was emphasised.

Throughout the responses concerns were raised about costs and how changes would be funded, and concern about the impacts on LAC that would arise from cuts to SEN budgets were emphasised.

> *"We urge the Welsh Government to act on CYPE's recommendation and ensure that schools publish details of their use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant either on their (the schools') own website or on the website of their respective regional consortia. This would help ensure that schools use the Grant for the benefit of pupils who are looked after children and young people, and boost their chances of better educational outcomes". (Shadow Minister for Education)*

> *"I welcome the document's intention to improve accountability across the sector and developing clear defined roles will support drawing up clear lines of accountability". (Children's Commissioner for Wales)*

List of respondents

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, Safeguarding Children
Action for Children Fostering Wales
Adoption UK Wales
Afasic Cymru
All Wales Children and Young People Advocacy Providers Group
Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Therapist
Anglesey County Council
ATL Cymru
Blaenau Gwent Looked after children education co-ordinator
Bridgend CBC LAC Education Co-ordinator
Cardiff Metropolitan University
Care Council for Wales
Care Forum Wales Looked After Children Network
Carmarthenshire CC
Catholic Education Service
Children's Commissioner for Wales
 Children in Wales
 Coleg Gwent
 Conwy CBC
 Cross Party group on Looked After Children
 Denbighshire CC, LAC Education Coordinator
 Estyn
 GL Assessment
 Gower College, Swansea, FE support staff and designated lead for LAC
 & care leavers
 Governor Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School
 Governor Tynywern Junior & Bedwas High Schools
 Governor, Monmouthshire
 Governor – not identified
 Governor – not identified
 Governor – not identified
 Governor – not identified
 Governors Wales
 First Campus Partnership, South East Wales Reaching Wider
 Partnership (Higher and Further Education)
 The Fostering Network
 Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
 Llamau
 Local Authority – not identified
 Local Authority – not identified
 Merthyr Tydfil CBC LAC Education Co-ordinator
 Name/Role not provided
 Name/ Role not provided
 Name not provided
 National Union of Teachers (NUT) Cymru
 Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers
 Neath Port Talbot CBC, Corporate Parenting Panel

NSPCC
NYAS
Paediatrician
Pembrokeshire Care Leavers
Pembrokeshire College, Safeguarding and Learner Services
Pembrokeshire County Council
Powys County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf LAC Education Support Team
Rhondda Cynon Taf Access and Inclusion Service
Shadow Minister for Education
SNAP Cymru
South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership (Higher and Further Education)
Swansea City and County, Joint Education and Social Services
Torfaen CBC Inclusion Services
Voices from Care
Vale of Glamorgan CBC Children's Services and LAC Education
Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Welsh Women's Aid
What About Me? Training provider
Wrexham County Borough Council
Ysgol Caban Aur, Headteacher
Youth Court Justice of the Peace
Youth Justice Board

There were nine responses using the young person's response form. Seven group responses were received representing 44 young people from Abertysswg, Bargoed, Blackwood, Brithdir, Crosskeys, Llanbradach, and Risca. A further two individual young person responses were received.

Annex: Related documents

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales - the Consultation (2015)
http://gov.wales/consultations/education/raising-the-ambitions-and-educational-attainment-of-children/?lang=en

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales - the Strategy (2015)
http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales - the Action Plan (2015)
http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales - the Strategy (Youth Friendly Version) (2015)
http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en

CASCADE Research – Looked after children and education
http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/looked-after-children-and-education/

Fostering Network Report
https://www.fostering.net/wales/educationreportenglish

Voices From Care Reports
http://www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk/news/201512/education-looked-after-children-report