



Number: WG52053

Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of response

Personal education plans for children looked after

Draft guidance for practitioners

March 2026

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview

This report presents a summary of the views presented by respondents to draft guidance for practitioners on Personal education plans for children looked after.

Action required

This document is for information only.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

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Additional copies

This summary of response and copies of all the consultation documentation are published in electronic form only and can be accessed on the Welsh Government's website.

Link to the consultation documentation: [Personal education plans for children looked after: draft guidance for practitioners](#)

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Introduction

Through [Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all](#), the Welsh Government wants every child to take part in, enjoy learning and have the best education possible to progress and expand their knowledge, skills and experience.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act) places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children looked after.

The [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice \(Looked After and Accommodated Children\) statutory guidance](#) provides advice on the care and support planning duties of local authorities in relation to care and support plans, including health and education.

The Part 6 care and support plan is a plan for children looked after. It brings together key information from the assessment of the child's developmental needs and from any other assessments of the child and their family. The [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(Wales\) \(CPPCR\) Regulations 2015](#) also require the preparation of a health plan, a Personal Education Plan (PEP), and a placement plan for the child. These should all be incorporated into the overall Part 6 care and support plan for the child.

The PEP allows children looked after and those who support them to identify and put in practice the best strategies to help them progress in their education.

From October 2024-2025, the Welsh Government worked with the sector to draft non-statutory guidance intended to support local authorities and schools to make PEPs more meaningful and impactful for children looked after.

The Welsh Government worked collaboratively with a wide range of professionals to develop the PEP guidance. A PEP Task and Finish Group was established, made up of individuals from local authorities who have a strategic role in promoting the education of care experienced learners. The task and finish group were a subgroup of the National Delivery Group (NDG) for the education of care experienced learners. The NDG comprises external stakeholders from Estyn, Consortia, local authorities and Third Sector who work to promote and support the educational outcomes of care experienced children in Wales. Drafts of the guidance were shared with the NDG and the all-Wales Independent Reviewing Officers group.

The Welsh Government also worked with partners, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales' office, local authorities (Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend and Swansea), Adoption UK and Voices from Care, to gather the views of care experienced learners on their education and what support they need. This included a separate engagement session with unaccompanied asylum-seeking learners, facilitated by Voices from Care and Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru.

This is what the young people told us:

- Listen to us
- Recognise and provide support for wellbeing needs

- Educate professionals about the needs of care experienced young people
- Challenge stigma and bullying
- Have an understanding of topics/circumstances which could be ‘triggering’
- Don’t pull us out of lessons
- Be empathetic about transitions
- Support our career aspirations
- Give us (Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people) opportunities for a full education

These views were used to shape the draft guidance.

Consultation responses

A consultation on the draft guidance ran from 6 October to 1 December 2025. The Cabinet Secretary for Education is grateful to those who took the time to respond to the consultation.

Views were received from 19 respondents. Those that responded came from organisations across the sector including local authorities, schools, Third Sector; education unions, public bodies and academia. A list of organisations that responded and were happy for their details to be shared can be found at Annex A.

Summary of responses

This section provides an analysis of answers to each of the 8 questions included in the consultation, which were answered by 18 of the consultation respondents. The remaining 1 response, which did not follow this structure, is analysed under ‘other consultation response’.

Question 1 – Do you agree that the advice provided in the PEP guidance will support local authorities, schools and settings to make the PEP process more meaningful and impactful for children looked after?

Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Total responses to this question
94% (16 respondents)		6% (1 respondent)	17

NB: There was 1 blank response to this question

A vast majority of respondents agreed the advice provided in the PEP guidance would support local authorities, schools and settings to make the PEP process more meaningful and impactful for children looked after.

Respondents provided the following additional comments:

Strengths of the Guidance

- Provides a clear framework on well-being and educational progress.
- Includes a process map and case studies to make PEPs more meaningful.
- Strong focus on the child's voice, ensuring views are gathered and acted upon.
- Promotes multi-agency collaboration, timely reviews, and integration of emotional and mental health support.
- References important principles from the Corporate Parenting Charter and addresses issues such as mental health.

Concerns and risks

- Without designated PEP officers, schools' implementation is likely to vary greatly.
- Guidance is non-statutory, limiting authority and therefore the guidance might not be followed. Creates a risk of PEPs becoming a tick-box exercise.
- Complexity due to links being provided to statutory responsibilities on PEPs (such as timeframes) in the Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children), rather than these being set out again in the PEP guidance. This may dilute clarity.
- Lack of national standards and expectations across local authorities.

Recommendations

- Ensure PEP reviews are integrated with children looked after reviews and that they align with school processes (e.g. Individual Development Plans (IDPs)).
- Introduce national templates and quality assurance mechanisms to monitor impact.
- Provide practical steps for practitioners to make PEPs genuinely impactful.
- Use findings from Estyn's upcoming thematic review to strengthen future guidance.
- Make PEPs flexible yet consistent, especially for children moving between schools or local authorities.
- Good examples of ways to obtain children's views are provided, but little is said about children not wanting to partake in any aspect of the PEP process.
- Providing feedback to children about what has happened as a consequence of their views could also be made more explicit.

Question 2 – Do you agree that the guidance adequately covers everything needed to support local authorities, schools and settings to make PEPs more meaningful and impactful for children

looked after?

Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Total responses to this question
53% (9 respondents)	29% (5 respondents)	18% (3 respondents)	17

NB: There was 1 blank response to this question

There was a mix of views on whether the guidance adequately covers everything needed to support local authorities, schools and settings to make PEPs more meaningful and impactful for children looked after.

The following was highlighted by respondents:

Positive aspects of the draft Guidance

- Defines impactful PEPs as personalised, high-quality, and child owned.
- Emphasises emotional and mental well-being being at the centre of the process.
- Promotes partnership working; quality assurance and supports accountability across services.
- Provides principles and strategies to support schools and local authorities.
- Covers minimum requirements for PEPs.

13 respondents provided qualitative feedback on what else should be covered in the guidance. To ensure all answers were considered, the analysis of these responses has been integrated into the analysis of question 3 below.

Question 3 – If you disagreed with the statement in question 2, what else should be captured in the guidance?

Eight respondents answered this question and their feedback was incorporated into the feedback provided by the 13 responses captured under question 2, which highlighted what else should be captured in the guidance:

Issues identified with the guidance

Monitoring and compliance

- The guidance does not define that there should be a coordinator role at local authority level which would support monitoring for compliance.
- Need clearer guidance on monitoring, accountability steps, and proactive measures.
- Provide clarity on what is meant by PEPs being 'live' documents. One respondent outlined that PEPs are currently reviewed only at statutory timescales in their area.

Child-centred practice

- Highlight how to create conditions in which children feel able to share their views e.g. take account of the child's age, language needs and capacity.
- Link actions in the PEP to children's views.
- Following the PEP meeting, give information to a child that could not/did not want to attend the PEP meeting.
- Highlight how to manage conflict between what a child wants to happen and what will/will not happen.
- Not all young people experience attachment difficulties – consider revising or rewording – same can be said for 'concentration and behaviour.'

Roles and responsibilities

- Provide clearer expectations for how health and CAMHS professionals should contribute to PEP meetings, information-sharing, and review cycles.
- Give schools guidance on how to interpret and respond to mental health recommendations within a PEP.
- Foster Carers have inconsistent participation and access to PEP documents.

Clarifications

- Inconsistency in the guidance regarding the status of PEPs in relation to post-16 Pathway Plans
- Greater clarity is needed on how PEPs interface with IDPs. Lack of integration between PEPs and IDPs leads to gaps in support.
- No acknowledgement of
 - where the document 'sits' in terms of education/children's services
 - different PEP formats between local authorities
- PEP process map:
 - state how often the PEP is to be reviewed
 - outline review recommendations when the young person moves home or school
 - outline whether a young person at 16 should consent to a pathway plan
 - set out the statutory time frame of 20 days in the first box at the top which outlines the emergency ten days.

Recommendations for improving the guidance

- Define designated person's role, compliance expectations, and escalation processes.
- Provide examples of how to involve carers and young people in setting goals, how to link PEPs with health and care plans, and transition planning for any school moves.
- Reference the support that is provided from third-sector organisations.
- In relation to advocacy add "professional" before "independent" in paragraph 23 and highlight the role of non-professional advocates (trusted adults) as per the SSWB Act.
- Integrate PEPs with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and IDP processes to avoid duplication. IDPs and PEPs should be combined and reviewed together.
- Frame expectations as requirements, not optional guidance.

- Specify minimum standards for PEP content, including how to report progress and attendance as well as attainment.
- Promote PEPs as a tool to enable more stable placements, addressing disruption in education for looked-after children.

Implementation considerations

- Ensure schools have sufficient resources and funding so they can implement the guidance effectively.
- Provide training for designated persons.
- Establish a national framework for consistency across local authorities.

Question 4 - Do you agree that the guidance provides sufficient advice to local authorities, schools and settings on making the PEP process child-centred?

Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Total responses to this question
78% (14 respondents)	11% (2 respondents)	11% (2 respondents)	18

The following was highlighted by respondents:

Strengths of the guidance

- Promotes child-centred practice and upholds the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Encourages consideration of the voice of the child, emotional well-being, and trauma awareness.
- By focusing on personal aspirations and well-being alongside academic progress, it provides a strong foundation for meaningful engagement.
- Highlights the need for a safe and supportive environment during PEP meetings.
- Recognises tools like the one-page profile for smooth transitions and information sharing.

Recommendations for improving the guidance

- Provide practical examples for capturing the child's voice effectively to feed into the PEP process and ensure meaningful engagement. Examples suggested included talking while playing football, building Lego, or allowing a child to create a video.
- Clarify how bi-lingual PEPs will be supported and monitored, particularly for children in Welsh-medium education or placed out of county where Welsh language provision may be limited.

- Ensure uniform application of child-centred principles across local authorities.
- Include remote or alternative pathways for participation.
- Provide clear guidance on how the child's voice should be recorded and acted upon, particularly during reviews and transitions.
- Set minimum expectations for trauma-informed and attachment-informed training for professionals.
- Ensure that children and young people are well informed to help them fully prepare their thoughts, or their voice may get lost and not heard.

Implementation considerations

- Build sufficient time into the PEP process for preparation and trust-building.
- Ensure professionals have capacity to engage meaningfully with children.
- Improve communication and awareness so children understand what a PEP is and when meetings occur.
- Promote PEPs as a tool to enable more stable placements, addressing disruption in education for children looked-after.

Question 5 – Are there any other sources of support or resources that it might be useful to highlight in the guidance?

Eight respondents answered this question. They suggested the following additional sources of support and resources that it would be useful to highlight in the guidance:

- Children's Commissioner for Wales [advice line](#)
- [SNAP Cymru](#), a third sector organisation that provides support for children with ALN
- [Meic Helpline](#) which provides information and advice for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales
- Children in Wales Getting Ready Project resources [Getting Ready Project | More Resources](#)
- Estyn's thematic reports:
 - [Whole-school approach to supporting pupils with additional learning needs \(ALN\)](#)
 - [Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after - a best practice report](#)
- NEU advice for schools on [Preventing and Reducing Exclusions / Support Looked After Children in Care](#)
- NICE guidelines for looked-after children and young people [Overview | Looked-after children and young people | Guidance | NICE](#)
- [Lundy's Model of Participation](#) which aims to provide a conceptual framework to support children's right to participation.
- Helen Sanderson tools:
 - [decisionmakingagreement-fillable.pdf](#)
 - [Decision-making-profile-fillable.pdf](#)
- National training or resources for foster carers; designated persons and children looked after teams
- Welsh-medium support materials from [Coleg Cymraeg](#).

- Add links to trauma informed practice guidance, mental health and wellbeing support and links to attachment and resilience.
- Research on working with children using creative methods.
- Provide information about centralised support networks or forums for sharing best practice across local authorities and schools.
- Link to each local authority that could direct carers/schools to services locally

Question 6 – What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the guidance on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects? Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

Fourteen respondents answered this question and highlighted the following:

Key Principles

- Guidance should uphold UNCRC principles, respecting the child’s culture and language.
- PEPs should be completed in the child or young person’s preferred language (Welsh, English, or other) and adults supporting them should ideally share that language.
- Offer training and resources for schools to manage bi-lingual PEPs.
- Include guidance for additional languages, addressing needs of asylum-seeking and linguistically diverse children.
- Make guidance and all documents available in Welsh.

Positive Opportunities

- Strengthen guidance to promote Welsh language use in PEPs.
- Ensure bi-lingual availability of PEPs and supporting materials.
- Provide remote support options for Welsh language provision when local resources are limited.
- Emphasise language choice as central to capturing the child’s voice.

Wider issues identified

- Estyn’s findings show Welsh-medium ALN provision is inconsistent and sometimes weak, creating a risk of “double disadvantage” for these learners..

Question 7 – In your opinion, could the guidance be formulated or changed so as to: have positive effects or more positive effects on

using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Seven respondents answered this question and highlighted the following:

Key recommendations to strengthen the guidance

- Make bilingual provision a mandatory requirement for PEPs and related documentation.
- Require PEPs to document the child's language choice and provision, aligning with the Welsh Language Measure
- Provide options for Welsh language support, including virtual solutions, especially for children placed out of county or settings without Welsh-speaking staff.
- Equip schools to manage bilingual PEPs effectively.

Wider issues identified

- Ensure foster carers and residential settings can access Welsh language support.
- Guarantee that mental health, ALN assessments, and advocacy are available through the medium of Welsh.
- Children wishing to use Welsh should not be forced to speak English or rely on interpreters, as care-related processes are already traumatic.
- Embedding Welsh language considerations into operational procedures, encourages active use rather than passive availability, which helps normalise Welsh in daily interactions.

Question 8 – 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.

Seven respondents answered this question and highlighted the following:

Key issues identified

- Emergency Placements: The 10 day working day timescale for emergency placements relies on timely notification to the relevant services that a child has been placed in an emergency placement. Notifications to relevant services are often delayed (up to two weeks), impacting timely support.
- IDP Reviews: Current wording suggests annual reviews only; recommendation is to review as needed, but at least annually.
- Independent Schools: Weak oversight by local authorities on educational experiences and outcomes for care-experienced children in independent schools.

Recommendations

Processes

- Continue embedding the voice of the child or young person in development and review processes.
- PEP data should feed into corporate parenting panels and inspection evidence.
- There should be stronger emphasis on monitoring, accountability, and statutory alignment. The PEP process should be regularly evaluated with feedback from children, carers, social workers, and health practitioners.
- Establish quality assurance processes to ensure consistency across local authorities. Provide clarity on who is responsible for validating examples and ensuring consistency across local authorities.
- Align PEPs with statutory IDPs to avoid duplication; consider six-monthly IDP reviews for children looked-after.
- The PEP reviewing process may be easier if it is termly; otherwise, specifying that a 6 monthly PEP review date should not be set during school holidays.
- A secure, national digital platform for PEPs would improve accessibility and collaboration between stakeholders.
- Ensure processes are streamlined and user-friendly for professionals

Other considerations

- Paucity of research on PEPs and their impact on children's experiences and outcomes, it may be helpful to acknowledge this in the guidance
- Provide guidance on encouraging cultural respect and inclusion in line with the Equality Act.
- Include advice on supporting digital learning and access to technology.

Workforce support

- Conduct a Workload Impact Assessment and mitigate additional burdens.
- Prioritise funding and investment, especially for ALN.
- Increase support staff for classroom behaviour management.
- Provide training in trauma-informed practice, mental health awareness, and neurodiversity.

Other consultation response

A further response which did not follow the structure of the consultation questions was received. The following was highlighted:

- The Looked after Children Education (LACE) coordinator should attend the first PEP meeting.
- The current system of the local authority arranging and chairing PEPs has given us the best quality PEPs the local authority has had in the last decade.
- The process map says 20 days – this needs to say 20 school days.
- Most local authorities won't have the capacity to maintain PEPs for pupils who are older than statutory school age.
- Point 51 suggests IROs attend PEP meetings. There are almost 300 children looked after of school age in the local authority. They have at least two PEP

meetings a year. This would mean the IRO would have to have 600 additional meetings a year.

Summary

The Welsh Government would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this consultation.

Feedback was provided on ideas on how the content of the guidance can be strengthened and improved which included the following themes:

- **Welsh language:** Strengthen the guidance to promote positive effects on the Welsh language, for example, PEPs should be bilingual; the language choice of child should be recognised; PEPs should document the child's language choice for their educational provision.
- **ALN and IDP processes:** Ensure integration with ALN and IDP processes to avoid duplication and ensure collaboration.
- **Roles, responsibilities, and multi-agency collaboration:** Provide clearer expectations for health, CAMHS, and foster carers' involvement; and the need for designated PEP officers and coordinators at local authority level.
- **Statutory requirements:** Frame expectations as requirements to promote consistency of good practice and prevent variation across settings.
- **Child-centred practice:** Promote respect for UNCRC principles, culture, and language; highlight trauma-informed and attachment-aware approaches; emphasise the importance of preparing children for PEP meetings and the child's voice in the PEP process.
- **Resources:** Add links to resources from sources such as the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Children in Wales, Snap, Estyn and NICE.
- **PEP process map:** Refine the PEP process map to ensure there is clarity on timeframes and roles.

Respondents provided the following advice on implementation:

- **Workforce issues:** The local authority should have a PEP coordinator role to support implementation and monitoring of the PEP process and promote multi-agency collaboration. Ensure teachers and IROs have sufficient resources and time to effectively support the PEP process.
- **Training:** Provide training for foster carers; designated persons and children looked after teams and set minimum expectations for trauma-informed and attachment-informed training for professionals.
- **National consistency:** Improve PEP consistency and quality by introducing a common PEP template; a digital platform for PEPs and quality assurance mechanisms across Wales.

Next steps

Feedback received in response to the consultation questions will be considered in informing the development of the final PEP guidance and implementation. Wider

issues highlighted by respondents (for example around ALN and social care) will be shared with relevant policy leads within the Welsh Government.

Welsh Government will continue to work closely with representatives from across the sector and other key stakeholders to promote the education of children looked after.

Annex A: Organisations that responded to the consultation and were happy for their details to be shared

- Children in Wales
- Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Estyn
- Kings Monkton School
- NASUWT
- National Education Union
- Newport City Council
- Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
- The Fostering Network
- Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
- University of Sussex/London Borough of Waltham Forest