



**Number: WG53913**

# Transformation Programme for Children's Services Legacy Report

Sixth Senedd Term  
2021 – 2026

Published: 18 March 2026

# Minister for Children and Social Care Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the legacy report for the Transformation Programme for Children's Services which ran through the Senedd's Sixth Senedd Term from 2021 to 2026. Delivery of the Programme was overseen by the Transformation Programme Delivery Group, firstly chaired by Jonathan Griffiths, former Director of Transformation for adult and children's services, and most recently by Helen-Mary Jones from Voices for Care Cymru.



I would like to start by acknowledging the work of my colleague Julie Morgan MS, who, helped shape a system that puts children and families at its heart whilst she was Deputy Minister for Social Services. The foundations she laid and the improvements she championed will benefit generations to come. We remain deeply grateful for all she achieved and the legacy she leaves behind.

During my time as Minister for Children and Social Care, I have strived to build on this work and support delivery of the Welsh Government's vision for children's services in Wales which is for more children to be supported to remain with their families with fewer children and young people entering care. We want the time that young people stay in care to be as short as possible, consistent with meeting the needs of the young person. While children are in care, we want them to remain close to home so they can continue to be part of their community - the child's network. We want a Wales where every child knows that they have rights, understands what they mean and has support to be able to exercise them. What young people have to say is important and their opinions matter." This aligns with the Children's Commissioners report: [The Right Way to Social Care](#)

The Transformation Programme was built on three key elements - radical reform, future provision of services and the whole system working together. It has been informed by the voice of children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced children's services – no better example is the Care Experienced Summits held annually since 2022. I attended my first Summit in May 2025 and the value of sitting in a room with the young people and hearing directly their experiences is immeasurable. You will read more about the Summits in this report.

During this Senedd term, the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee undertook an inquiry into radical reform of children's services. The resultant report ***If not now, then when?*** can be found on the Committee's web page: [Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform](#). The Committee's work reinforced the direction of travel for our Programme and the importance of its delivery.

In this report, you will read about the progress made this Term and some examples of what the Programme has achieved including:

- The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 ('The 2025 Act'), making us the first UK nation to introduce a ban on profit from children's care in Wales.
- The Care Experienced Summits and the Radical Reform Declaration and Vision – the first of their kind in the UK.
- The development and publication of the Corporate Parenting Charter and its 11 principles of corporate parenting developed with young people.
- Parental Advocacy services rolled out across Wales.
- The creation of Foster Wales, this national identity enabled consistent messaging, streamlined recruitment, and fostered a stronger sense of community among carers.

Whilst considerable progress has been made, we do acknowledge there is more work to do, and the report concludes with recommendations from the Delivery Group for the next Senedd term, please do read and consider these. We have taken some big strides on this journey which will continue into the next Senedd term and beyond.

I will close by saying thank you to the Transformation Delivery Group for their work and most importantly to the young people who have shared their voice, we have listened and we will continue to act.

**Dawn Bowden MS**  
**Minister for Children and Social Care**



So we need Wales to support us, to believe  
in us, to help us grow and become the  
happy adults we want to be”

Care-experienced young person

Feb 2025

# Transformation Delivery Group - Chair's Foreword

It has been a huge privilege to be involved in the Government's drive to deliver radical reform for care experienced children and young people and their families over the term of this Senedd; first supporting care experienced young people in participating in the process and then, for the last 15 months, as Independent Chair of the Transformation Delivery Group.



I want to begin by thanking my fellow Group members, including the young people, and everyone who has participated in all aspects of the Group's work. Your consistent and thoughtful participation has been key to our success so far. I am also very grateful to the Welsh Government staff team. Their support for the Group's work has been exemplary.

The Radical Reform Summit process has been groundbreaking. Welsh Ministers across portfolio have met care experienced children and young people on four occasions over four years. They have listened to them, acted upon their concerns and fed back to them on action taken. Welsh Ministers have made themselves accountable to the care experienced community and have set clear expectations on those planning and delivering services to do the same. The Radical Reform Declaration – last revised at the Summit in May 2025 – sets out a clear vision of what radically reformed services will look and feel like. Over a hundred young people have taken part in the Summits directly, and many more have contributed through consultations. The level of commitment that Ministers have shown is unprecedented, and it is fitting. These, after all, are our children. As a nation, we have made the decision, for their own safety, to remove them from their families and care for them ourselves. We owe them the same care and support as we provide for our own children. Acting on behalf of the people of Wales, Welsh Ministers have demonstrated that they truly understand this, and I can't overstate how much that has meant to young people.

Of course, developing a vision is just the first step. Transforming that vision into reality takes commitment, resources and time. It takes the courage to challenge vested interests. And the radical reform process, in which the Transformation Delivery Group has played a leading role, has, I believe, been characterised by all of these. Sector leaders have engaged positively. They have respected the voices of children and young people and embraced the Vision set out in the Declaration. This positive engagement across sector, has been key to the change the Group has been able to help deliver. It will be vital for the next Government to ensure that this engagement is maintained so that progress toward radical reform can continue. Young people themselves have not only engaged with Ministers at the Summits. They have got stuck into the transformation process needed to deliver the Vision. They have spoken at conferences and events and are supporting the development of local good practice. They have attended meetings of the Transformation Delivery Group and the Corporate Parenting Implementation Group, consulted with other

young people on the subjects under discussion and provided constructive support and challenge throughout. Having care experienced young people in the room transforms the way professionals engage and, I would argue, how we think and act. As Chair of the Transformation Delivery Group, I am immensely grateful to them. This Report sets out what has been done in this Senedd term to deliver radical reform. There is no need for me to list all the achievements here. The progress towards delivery of all the key Programme of Government commitments speaks for itself. However, I would particularly highlight the legislation to eliminate profit from children's care. I commend the steadfastness that has been shown in the teeth of some very strong opposition. I would personally urge the next Government to fully integrate the eliminating profit into the wider transformation agenda, and to ensure that the momentum for full implementation is maintained.

The two subgroups of the Transformation Delivery Group have done sterling work. The Data and Metrics Workstream has made huge progress towards identifying what data we need to enable us to monitor the delivery of radical reform. This is key. I am very grateful to Welsh Government officials for their expert chairing.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Subgroup, chaired by Sarah Crawley of Barnardo's, has succeeded in developing the first National Early Intervention and Prevention Framework, not only for Wales but, as far as we can see, in the world. It sets out the support that should be there for babies, children, young people and families everywhere in Wales when they need it. I am very grateful to Sarah for her leadership in this complex area. Now we all need to work to deliver it.

This Report concludes with a series of recommendations for the next Government. While much has been achieved there is still much to do to deliver radical reform. It will, of course, be for the incoming Government to set its own programme and priorities. We trust that in setting those priorities they will give due regard to the views of the cross sector professional leadership represented in the Transformation Delivery Group, and, above all, to the voices of the real experts – care experienced children and young people themselves. If Wales is to prove itself to truly be a rights respecting nation, in line with our commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we must continue to ensure that the rights of those most in need of their Government's support – care experienced children and young people – are fully realised. As members of the Transformation Delivery Group – professionals and young people – we stand ready to support the next Government in building on a legacy of which we are proud and working to ensure that full realisation.

**Helen-Mary Jones**  
**Chair of Transformation Delivery Group**

# Young People's Perspective

On behalf of all the Care Experienced Young Ambassadors we want to begin by saying how proud we are to have worked together to help bring about radical reform of services for care experienced children and young people and their families. We want to say a huge thank you to all the young people who have taken part – filling in surveys, coming to meetings, speaking at events. Everyone has given so much time and effort, sharing their own experiences and learning from each other so that we can convince everyone that big changes are needed. It hasn't always been easy, but it has been worth it.

We also want to say thank you to everyone who has worked with us. The Ministers who have listened and acted; the Ministers' teams who are working to keep the Ministers' promises; the professionals who have worked with us in the Transformation Delivery Group and other meetings who have treated us with respect; and the team at Voices from Care Cymru who brought us together and have supported us all the way. Thank you all.

When we were invited by Voices from Care Cymru to get involved in the Radical Reform Summit--- we weren't all sure it would work. Would these important people – Welsh Ministers and the First Minister - really make so much time to listen to us? Would they believe us? – too often care experienced children and young people are not believed. Would they do something about what we told them? Some of us had been involved in consultations before that hadn't changed anything.

But we could tell from the first time we met the Ministers at the first Summit Meeting in 2022 that this really was a chance to help make a difference for care experienced children and young people. They spent the whole day with us. Everyone was treated equally. They really listened to what we said. Some of what we told them shocked some of them. They found out that some of the things they thought had already been changed weren't working, or they weren't working for everyone. They were as frustrated as we were to find out that care experienced child and young people often have very different experiences, depending on where they live in Wales. Those of us who were there will never forget that day. We left with an agreed Declaration, a vision of what radically reformed services will look and feel like, and a set of promises to work together to deliver change that will last.

So much has happened since December 2022.

We have held two more National Summits and a Regional Summit in the north. We have gone to lots of meetings with the Welsh Government team and other professionals, supporting and challenging them as they work to make the vision in the Declaration come to life. We've worked on corporate parenting and on wider transformation through the Transformation Delivery Group. We've spoken at conferences and events and are giving advice to organisations about how to support young people to get involved.

We have met more care experienced children and young people and have been able to bring them into the Young Ambassadors team so that they can share their views

with Welsh Ministers. We now have an updated Declaration that we agreed with Ministers in May last year.

We knew from the start that things couldn't change overnight. But a lot has changed already. This Report explains that in detail, and it is good to see how much has been done. Some things stand out for us. When we told the Minister that some Local Authorities were telling foster carers that they weren't allowed to hug foster children she wrote to the Authorities straightway and told them to change their advice. Foster carers now have one-page profiles so that care experienced children and young people can learn a bit about them before they meet them, because we asked for them.

We think the new National Early Intervention and Prevention Framework that the Transformation Delivery Group has come up with is really important. This is about children and families getting the help they need when they need it. Some of us are sure that if that help had been there for us, we could have stayed with our families. Some of us know that if that help had been there for them, they would not have lost their children, and their families would have stayed together. We haven't been able to find another Framework like this anywhere in the world. This is a chance for Wales to do something amazing. We must make it work.

And one of the biggest things – the end of profit from care. Young people campaigned hard to stop private companies making profits out of our need to be cared for. It has been so exciting to see the Minister bring the law to the Senedd, to see young people giving evidence to the Senedd Committee to ask the Committee to support the law, and then to see it passed in to law and sealed.

This is a law made for us. A promise kept. And when we speak about this to people from other countries it makes us so proud that Wales is really acting for its care experienced children and young people, through our Ministers.

But there is still a lot to do. We need the new Government elected in May to keep working with us, to build on what has been done and to do more. For example, we are worried that it is taking too long to end profit in care. We hope the next Government will be able to speed things up. And if that means spending more money, then they should spend it.

The National Early Intervention and Prevention Framework has to work for all children, young people and families everywhere in Wales. The new Government will have to make sure this happens. We think that might need a new law.

And we have new ideas and concerns we will want to talk to new Ministers about. Every time we meet new care experienced young people, we learn more about what needs to change. For example, we are very worried about how some young people are restrained in children's homes. And we want to know how the new Government will make sure that young people leaving care don't end up living in poverty.

One thing we are asking the new Government to do is to make sure the new First Minister and all the Welsh Ministers meet us as soon as possible so that we can help them understand what is going on and build trust. We know they will have their own

ideas and priorities. We very much hope that the care experienced community will be one of those priorities and that they will make time for us. We hope they will want to support the Radical Reform Declaration and build on it with us.

We know that there are many people all over Wales working hard to deliver the vision in the Declaration. But we are not sure that everyone who needs to be is fully on board. For example, when we wrote to all Local Authority Chief Executives asking how they were involving care experienced children in corporate parenting decisions nine of them wrote back to us, which means that thirteen didn't. We don't think this is ok, especially because it was the Minister who asked us to contact them.

We hear a lot in meetings about accountability. For us, that means that someone has to get into trouble if something isn't done or it isn't done right. We've worked with some brilliant people through the radical reform process who are doing brilliant things. And we agree that when big changes are needed it's important to work with people and support them to make those changes. But the Declaration is clear that children and young people everywhere in Wales must have the same rights and the same support, and we know that isn't happening yet.

We think the new Government – if it decides to carry on with radical reform – will have to think hard about what to do if supporting people and encouraging them to make change doesn't work. We think new laws may be needed.

Whatever happens, we are all ready to keep working with the new Government and the professionals. We are proud of what has already been done, and we know Wales can do even more.

**Melissa Noot**  
**Amiee Lessauter**  
**Georgia Toman**

**On behalf of the Care Experienced Young Ambassadors**

# Contents

<b>Purpose of the Legacy report</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Examples of wider activity which has supported Transformation Delivery</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Transformation Programme and Governance</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Delivery:</b>	
<b>Transformation Programme work streams:</b>	
Data and Metrics	17
Early Intervention and Prevention	18
<b>Programme for Government commitments:</b>	
1. Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers	19
2. Eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children during the next Senedd term.	23
3. Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable.	26
4. Strengthen public bodies in their role as corporate parents.	28
5. Prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care.	33
6. Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.	36
7. Legacy of Care - Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in Wales	38
8. Foster Wales - Strengthening Public Fostering in Wales.	42
<b>Other policy areas:</b>	
National Adoption Service	47
Kinship Care – Building Family-Based Alternatives to Care	52
<b>Conclusion and recommendations</b>	<b>55</b>

## Purpose of the legacy report

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government in 2021-2026 contains 8 commitments, which taken together informed the vision to radically transform Children's Services. The aim of these commitments was to effect change across the whole system in Wales.

1. Explore radical reform of current services for looked after children and care leavers.
2. Eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children during the next Senedd term.
3. Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable.
4. Strengthen public bodies in their role as 'corporate parent'.
5. Prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care.
6. Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.
7. Continue to support and uphold the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people.
8. Support our national Fostering Wales scheme.

The Programme has been in place over the course of this Senedd Term (2021-2026) and has been supported as mentioned previously in this report by a cross-sector Delivery Group, chaired most recently by Helen-Mary Jones. The group's broad membership has consisted of all the key leaders and agencies involved in the lives of care experienced children, including local authority children's service, the third sector, the Children's Commissioner and representatives from across health, education, family justice and housing and most importantly care-experienced children themselves.

The aim of this report is to describe the work and achievements over the last five years. The Transformation programme has been ambitious and wide reaching, involving short, medium and long-term projects designed to shape the future landscape for children's social services. As we near the end of this Senedd Term, the Transformation programme will draw to a close. However, the journey does not end here and the updates in this report outline some of the planned next steps in these areas.

## Examples of wider activity which has supported Transformation Delivery

Whilst this report focuses on activity under the Transformation Programme there have been other key areas of work which are linked to the vision for children's services in Wales. Some examples of these are:

### Promoting the education of care experienced learners

Welsh Government is committed to improving the educational outcomes of care-experienced learners. Our ambitions for education in Wales are set out in '[Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all](#)'. They include a commitment to equity of outcome in education for every child and young person in Wales.

Between 2021 and March 2024 Welsh Government provided £1.2m to local authorities to pilot a Virtual School Model (VSM) in Wales, intended to promote the educational outcomes for care experienced children. An [independent evaluation of the VSM pilot](#) (published 17 December 2025) identified a range of positive impacts across local authorities that accessed the funding including enhanced integration between teams supporting care experienced learners and more preventative provision.

The review's findings will be used to shape work to ensure care experienced learners in Wales have the support they need in their education to thrive. The VSM pilot complements other Welsh Government support and resources to enhance educational outcomes for care experienced learners in Wales:

- Officials have worked with local authorities and Third Sector partners to co-produce a suite of guidance documents intended to help local authorities and schools better understand and respond to the needs of care experienced learners and promote effective practice.
- We are funding Adoption UK Cymru in this financial year to provide training for education practitioners to help them respond effectively to the social and emotional needs of care experienced learners.
- We have commissioned Estyn to undertake a thematic review into the effectiveness of education provision for care experienced learners in 2026. The findings will be used to identify and share effective practice across the sector.
- We are working with the sector to ensure learners benefit from the extra targeted support provided by the Pupil Development Grant for children looked after as well as the School Essentials Grant, available for all children looked after in reception to year 11.

Care experienced learners are at the heart of this work, with their voices championed by our key partners, including local authorities, Voices from Care and Adoption UK Cymru.

## Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales Pilot

The Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales pilot was for 'Category 3' care-experienced young people leaving care who turned 18 years of age between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023. They were eligible for the pilot if they were:

- A person leaving care turning 18 years of age between 1st July 2022 and 30th June 2023.
- A person who had been looked after by a local authority for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, which began after they reached 14 and ended after they reached 16.
- A person leaving care who was resident in Wales, or who was placed outside of Wales but is supported by a Welsh local authority's social services department.

The pilot ran for three years, with each member of the cohort receiving a basic income payment of £1280 per month (£1600, pre-tax) for a duration of up to 24 months from the month after their 18th birthday. A total of 644 young people were recipients of basic income during the pilot.

The payment was unconditional with no requirements attached. Individuals could work and earn additional income with no impact on their basic income payments. The payment offered was the same for everyone and was not altered during the pilot.

This pilot was intended to enhance support already provided to care leavers in Wales, such as Council Tax exemption and the establishment of the St David's Day Fund. Welsh Government saw basic income as a direct investment in this group of young people, giving them the space to thrive whilst securing their basic needs. Delivery of the pilot concluded in 2025. Day-to-day delivery of the pilot was largely the responsibility of local authority social services teams across Wales. Social services teams were the interface between the young people and the pilot and continued to support the young people as they would do any other care-leaver or care-experienced young person.

Evaluation of the pilot is ongoing and continues into 2027. Annual evaluation reports have been published in [2024](#), [2025](#) and 2026, with each report providing interim insights from the emerging evidence. Welsh Government is committed to learning about the outcomes of this important initiative.

## Advocacy

An "active offer" is the sharing of information about the statutory right and entitlement of a child or young person in certain circumstances to have access to an independent professional advocacy service. Children and young people are entitled to an active offer of advocacy from a statutory Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) when they become looked after or become subject of child protection enquiries leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference.

Our National Approach to Statutory Advocacy already delivers a statutory right to long-term independent advocacy support that enables children in care and care leavers with the ability to opt in and out as they wish to. This continues to be monitored by the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy Forum chaired by Welsh Government that meets bi-annually. Welsh Government also sits on the National Provider Forum, facilitated by Children in Wales, with providers of advocacy services that meets quarterly.

A core component of the National Approach is the Active Offer which delivers an absolute long-term right to advocacy from a statutory Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) as part of a clear and consistent pathway to deliver their rights and entitlements. This pathway is set out in detail within the [Legacy report](#) published by the Advocacy Task and Finish Group in the Summer of 2022. It ensures social workers inform children of their right to advocacy, helps them to understand the importance and benefits of advocacy and with the child's permission, facilitates independent contact between the child and the advocacy service.

The advocacy service makes independent contact with the child to meet with them, to make the Active Offer and subsequently confirm to the local authority if the offer has been taken up or declined. The 2022 Legacy Report is clear and confirms that "Opting out does not mean that the child or young person is no longer entitled to an advocate. If the child or young person decides at a later stage that they wish to access advocacy, the social worker will provide the advocacy service with their details to allow them to arrange an introductory meeting with the child or young person.

### Mental Health

The Welsh Government has published the all- age [Mental health and wellbeing strategy 2025 to 2035 | GOV.WALES](#), which outlines the approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing for the next 10 years. This strategy focuses on the importance of cross government working and this is particularly important when we are considering the needs of care experienced babies, children and young people.

You will hear later in this report about the guidance which has been published for services delivering therapeutic support to care experienced children and young people. The Practice Guidance steers therapeutic services working with care experienced children and young people to work in closer partnership across health, social care and third sector to ensure care experienced children and young people receive trauma informed therapeutic support at the right time, in the way that is right for them. This work compliments the work that has also been undertaken to develop a CAMHS specification as referenced in our previous reply.

The national service specification for CAMHS sets out the Government's expectation of CAMHS services in Wales, and how it works with other services to establish the necessary arrangements to deliver integrated care. We have also amended guidance to ensure that care experienced children moving health board areas are not disadvantaged and retain their waiting time status for CAMHS.

Listening to the voices of those with lived experience and upholding children's rights is central to our core values in Welsh Government. The guidance was developed in response to the feedback and voices of care experienced children and young people who told us they needed improved access to mental health and wellbeing support. The guidance has been co-designed with stakeholders, including foster carers, adoptive parents and practitioners.

## Housing

Since 2019-20 we have been investing an additional £3.7m a year in the Youth Support Grant to identify young people at risk of becoming homeless at an earlier stage to ensure they are given the support required to prevent it. As part of this funding, local authorities appointed a Youth Homelessness Coordinator based in the youth service, working with their housing, education and social services colleagues to ensure those at risk of homelessness are identified and supported.

The £3.4m a year youth homelessness innovation fund, launched in 2019-20, supports projects that are specific to vulnerable young people aged 16-25 at risk of becoming homeless or currently homeless including but not limited to, care leavers, disabled young people and those who have previously been in the youth justice system. The fund includes a range of projects such as supported accommodation, supported lodgings, training flats, tenancy support, a shared accommodation scheme, a transition support scheme and an LGBTQ+ supported housing scheme. Following the success of Housing First in Wales there are also 4 Housing First for Youth projects, running across 5 local authorities as part of the fund.

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework for Wales was reviewed and updated in May 2023. The [Framework](#) is aimed at organisations that support young people in making their journeys towards leaving care in Wales. It is written for local authority commissioners, leaving care managers, housing managers and providers of housing and support for young people.

The Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill, introduced on 19 May 2025, will transform the response to those who are homeless in Wales and fundamentally change our homelessness system, to focus on earlier intervention and prevention. In recognition of the increased risk of homelessness that care leavers face, the Bill delivers a package of measures that are collectively designed to end use of the homelessness system as a route out of care and improve the transition from care to independent living.

Social services and local housing authorities will be expected to work together to develop joint protocols for young people, and the Bill will require social services to take reasonable steps to ensure that suitable accommodation is available for occupation, for certain care leavers once they leave care.

## When I'm Ready Scheme

During this Senedd term, the Welsh Government continued its commitment to supporting care-experienced young people as they move towards independence. Since April 2016, young people in Wales have had the right to remain with their

foster families beyond the age of 18 up to 21, or up to 25 if they are completing an agreed programme of education or training. The purpose of this arrangement is to ensure that care leavers are better equipped for adult life and able to transition at a pace that reflects their needs.

We recognise that, while the When I'm Ready scheme provides valuable stability for young people, there remain ongoing challenges in its implementation across Wales. During this Senedd term, the Welsh Government reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the scheme and addressing barriers identified by young people, foster carers, and local authorities.

To support this, we began preparatory work for a full review of When I'm Ready and have now taken the next step by commissioning an external organisation to undertake a comprehensive, Wales-wide assessment of the scheme. This review will examine what is working well, where improvements are needed, and whether changes to existing legislation or updated guidance are required to place the scheme on a firmer footing.

This work will continue into the next Senedd term, with a clear focus on improving consistency, strengthening care planning, and ensuring smoother transitions into post-18 services for care-experienced young people.

# Transformation Programme and Governance

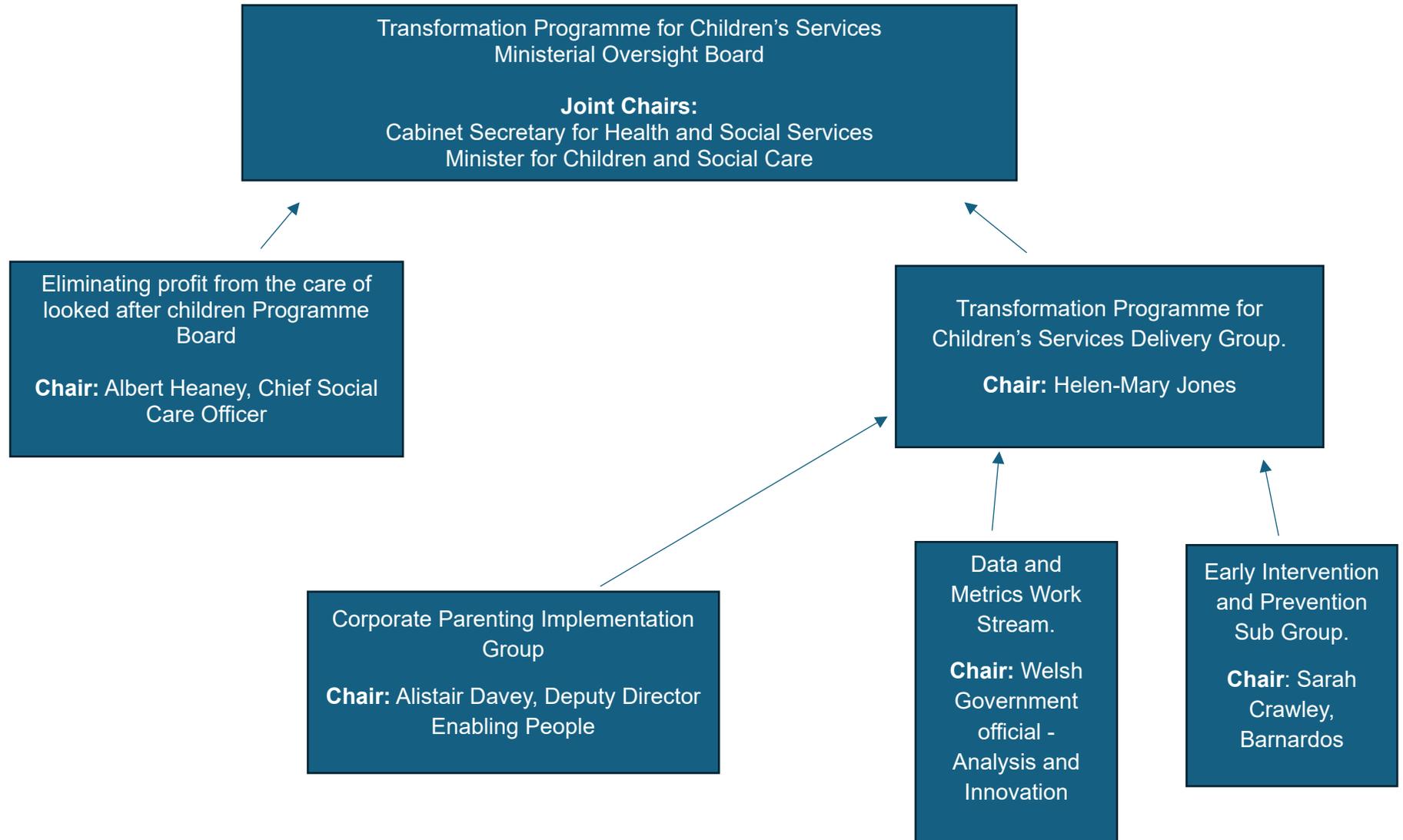
A Transformation Delivery Group was established to lead on work to drive forward the delivery of the 8 Programme for Government commitments, ensuring those commitments are in place and embedded by 2026. Members include key partners from local authorities and the third sector as well as care-experienced young people. The full list of organisations represented on the Group alongside care-experienced young people and Welsh Government policy leads are:

Voices from Care Cymru,  
NSPCC,  
Children in Wales,  
Cafcass Cymru,  
Cwmpass,  
NHS Health Professionals,  
NYAS Cymru,  
TGP Cymru,  
Barnardos,  
National Adoption Service,  
Foster Wales,  
Welsh Local Government Association,  
ADSS Cymru,  
All Wales Heads of Children's Services  
Social Care Wales,  
Children's Commissioner for Wales,  
EYST,  
Care Inspectorate Wales.

A new Ministerial Oversight Board was also established, made up of key stakeholders to oversee the Transformation Programme. The purpose of the Board was to provide political leadership, direction, and support in delivering the transformation programme. When the Board was first established it was co-chaired by the then First Minister Mark Drakeford MS and the then Deputy Minister for Social Services Julie Morgan MS.

At the end of the Senedd Term, the Board has been joint chaired by the Minister for Children and Social Care and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services. Its membership included the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Welsh Language, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing. This cross-Government membership demonstrates the commitment across Government.

## Transformation Programme for Children's Services Governance Structure



# Delivery

## Transformation Programme Workstreams

The Transformation Programme Delivery Group identified two workstreams to take forward new areas in the Programme:

### **Workstream - Data/Metrics**

The Delivery Group wanted to establish how best to measure progress. In May 2024, the “Data and Performance” sub-group was set up with the task of developing a set of performance metrics.

It was expected the project would deliver the following outputs:

- Establish existing data sources to measure the progress of the Transformation of the Programme.
- Advise the Delivery Group on gaps in existing data collected by Welsh Government and other key partners.
- Consider the recommendations made by the Senedd’s Children Young People Committee in their report ‘If not now when’.
- Consider suggestions to measure progress made by members of the Transformation Delivery Group, in particular those for which current data sources do not measure.
- Develop options to improve data collection, accessibility, and dissemination to be considered by Delivery Group members and Welsh Government.

This sub-group met several times throughout 2024 and produced a proposed list of measures. There was an initial meeting to establish project scope and remit. This was followed by a series of one-on-one meetings with each of the respective organisations to determine what data is collected and available from each organisation. These meetings also discussed the recommended data items and how each organisation could potentially meet these recommendations.

After these meetings a draft set of potential metrics was produced. The group met regularly to from June to September to review and refine this long list of potential metrics until a final set of metrics was reached.

The work concluded with a recommendation that the proposed performance metrics be developed into an annual report, which would allow all stakeholders to understand and scrutinise the delivery of children’s social care. This is the basis of the recommendation in the conclusion of this report.

## **Workstream - Early Intervention and Prevention**

The Delivery Group determined a key aspect of the Transformation Programme was early intervention and prevention so established an Early Intervention and Prevention subgroup chaired by Sarah Crawley, Director Barnardo's Cymru and Southwest, and membership included representatives of key public and third sector agencies.

The Early Intervention and Prevention subgroup was asked to focus on:

- Defining Early help and Prevention
- Understanding what early help and prevention offers are available across Wales
- Collation of good practice from these offers.

The subgroup worked together to develop a new All-Wales Early intervention and prevention framework. The framework doesn't replace existing guidance, diagrams and definitions, but brings them together under one over-arching framework. The intention is to understand and position services which are universal, primary, secondary and targeted when babies, children, young people and families need them. The Framework emphasises services need to be available at the right time, delivered in the right way, as part of a full offer across Wales.

The ambition of the Framework is to draw together learning and experience across Wales to support a whole system approach to maintaining and improving the provision of early intervention and prevention services, to safely reduce the number of babies, children and young people coming into the care system. The framework also provides an overview of the importance of early intervention and the critical services needed in Wales to prevent children entering care and our commitment to supporting families to thrive.

The Framework gives organisations a way of describing provision and support, where it sits and fits in the system and an ability to share this with all organisations whose aim is to prevent babies, children and young people's needs from escalating.

A copy of the final version of the Framework has been published as an annex to this report.

# Overseeing the Transformation Programme

In addition to the new areas looked at in depth by the subgroups, the Transformation Delivery Group has also overseen and driven the delivery of the 8 Programme for Government commitments for children's social services during this Senedd Term. The following section provides a summary of achievement against the 8 commitments as well as other areas the Group prioritised which fall outside of these commitments.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers.</b>
--------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Care Experienced Summits

Understanding the lived experience of children and young people in care and how this impacts their lives has been at the heart of everything we have done as part of the Transformation Programme. Welsh Government has worked closely with Voices from Care Cymru to organise four Care Leavers Summits during this Senedd term.

These Summits have not been held in the UK before. They are all about making sure children and young people's voices are heard. Whether children and young people are in care or have left care, they can share their experiences, ideas, and hopes for the future direct with Ministers. At the Summits the children and young people choose what they talk about and get to ask the questions and say what they think.

At the last summit in May 2025, the children and young people met with 5 Ministers from the Welsh Government, they were:

- Minister for Children and Social Care,
- Cabinet Secretary for Education,
- Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing,
- Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language
- Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip.

After the first Summit a declaration was drafted and first signed by the First Minister at the time, Mark Drakeford MS in 2023. What makes it special is it was created by young people and government Ministers working together. It includes a vision for the future and shows how important children and young people's views are in making changes.



Following the Summit, Ministers wrote to the local authorities to share what children and young people talked to them about, which also fed into the declaration.

You can read the declaration on: <https://www.gov.wales/declaration-radical-reform-children-and-young-peoples-care>





## Multi-Agency Practice Framework

We have delivered a National Multi-Agency Practice Framework to improve consistency of practice by engaging with representatives from local authorities, health, the third sector, police, and safeguarding boards to gather opinions and evidence about how it can add most value.

The rationale behind this work was to improve consistency of practice across Wales and support a strengths-based way of working across agencies delivering children's services. The Framework was primarily developed for children's services but can be adapted for use in any organisation working with children.

Partnership working has developed extensively in Wales over the last decade with agencies pooling expertise, support, and funding to navigate children through situations which can seem insurmountable. When this works well children, families and professionals all see benefits but when it fails it adds risk, delays and missed opportunities for children, young people and families; and increases frustration and workloads for professionals. Every part of the system needs to adopt a collaborative problem-solving approach, which is strength based, and the aim of this Framework is to drive forward progress and success with good practice.

The Framework is a live working document to take account of developments and changes in practice and the policy landscape across Wales; a copy can be found at: [National multi-agency practice framework for children's services | GOV.WALES](#)

Published alongside the Framework, the first tool to support implementation - the National Practice Guidance on Therapeutic Support for Care Experienced Children - [National Practice Guidance on Therapeutic Support for Care Experienced Children](#).

The Practice Guidance steers existing therapeutic services working with care experienced children and young people to work in closer partnership across health, social care and third sector to ensure care experienced children and young people receive trauma informed therapeutic support at the right time, in the way that is right for them.

Listening to the voices of those with lived experience and upholding children's rights is central to our core values in Welsh Government. This guidance has been developed in response to the feedback and voices of care experienced children and young people who told us they needed improved access to mental health and wellbeing support. The guidance has been co-designed with stakeholders, including foster carers, adoptive parents and practitioners.

### Models of Care

In September 2024 Social Care Wales, 4C's, DEEP (the Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice Programme) and the Young Commissioners group led two events (Cardiff and Llandudno). The events aimed to set out a definition and the most recent evidence on use of models of care in children's residential homes. The events were an opportunity for all providers to come together to reflect on practice, access evidence and share their commitment to supporting good outcomes for children. They were co-facilitated by young people living in residential care, who also provided a keynote session, providing their evidence and views on 'what works' when living in a model of care.

### **Next Steps**

#### Sharing Best Practice

Work is underway to explore the development of a platform for sharing best practice which will aim to continue the consistency of multi-agency working across Wales and identify and share examples of good practice.

#### Vision 2030

Welsh Government and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS Cymru) held two workshops to explore how we can build on the good practice in systems and services working on a multi-agency basis across Wales to support children and families with complex needs.

Two workshops were held, the first on 26 June 2025 and 11 September 2025. The first was with Heads of Children's Services and the second included wider public sector agencies. A further workshop has taken with the third sector, and we have taken feedback from parents, children and young people.

Alongside this a series of workshops on the National Practice Guidance have taken place and will feed into a summary report of findings and recommendations from the workshops. This will be presented to cross sector leaders before the end of the Term to inform how they can be taken forward and how we will shape our Vision for Children's Services 2030.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Eliminate profit from the care of looked after children during the next Senedd term.</b>
--------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Background

The Welsh Government’s Programme for Government contained a commitment to remove profit from the care of children looked after.

The policy intent is to ensure public money invested in care for children looked after is not extracted as profit, but instead any surpluses are reinvested back into the system to support better outcomes, services and professional development. A key consideration of this work is to ensure a strong focus on returning children who are in placements away from their homes and communities, where that is consistent with their well-being.

To help implement this commitment we established a cross-sector Eliminating Profit Programme Board, made up of membership across the care and support sector to consider potential risks and advise on the overall approach. The Board is supported by independently chaired workstreams focused on local authorities and the not-for-profit sector respectively.

The Board oversees Welsh Government’s National Programme Plan for removing profit which sets out high-level activity and milestones for Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales and local authorities through the implementation period. A national-level local government implementation plan for removing profit is co-ordinated by ADSS Cymru. Going forward local authorities will also be required to prepare and publish annual sufficiency plans about their duty to ensure, as far as practicable, that they can provide children looked after with accommodation that is within the authority’s area, and meets their needs.

### Action delivered against the commitment

Following a public consultation the legislative provisions to remove profit were introduced through the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill in May 2024. This received Royal Assent on 24 March 2025, becoming the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 (“The 2025 Act”).

The 2025 Act restricts the making of profit in the provision of care home services provided wholly or mainly to children, secure accommodation services and fostering services (known as ‘restricted children’s services’) to a local authority or other not-for-profit entity as defined in the legislation.

The 2025 Act also provides that any unreasonable or disproportionate payments made by a not-for-profit provider of restricted children’s services must be taken into account by the Welsh Ministers when deciding if a provider is a fit and proper person to be registered. This is to ensure that our policy intent – to prevent the extraction of profit from children’s care – is not undermined.

Following Royal Assent, we consulted on proposed changes to existing regulations regarding the registration of service providers, and their annual returns. The changes are intended to ensure that Care Inspectorate Wales has the information and assurance it needs to determine whether a provider of these 'restricted children's services' meets the not-for-profit conditions in the 2025 Act. Work to support implementation will continue over the coming years, in partnership with the sector.

### Examples of collaboration

Cross-sector collaboration has been critical to both the development of the primary and secondary legislation as well as its implementation timescales and has been facilitated through public consultations and the Programme Board and workstreams.

We continue to monitor progress with the transition to a not-for-profit model. In May 2025 we published the first in a series of reports setting out progress including the number of new not-for-profit registrations. The second report was published in November 2025 – both are [available](#) on the Welsh Government website.

### Workforce development and implementation

Key national stakeholders have worked collaboratively to support implementation of removal of profit. This includes the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru providing targeted implementation support to local authorities, working closely with All Wales Heads of Children's Services and key partners such as Social Care Wales, 4C's, Foster Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales. Social Care Wales has worked with national stakeholders and local authorities to lead support in workforce development including initiating the development of a national workforce plan and delivering national recruitment campaigns. 4C's, Social Care Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Foster Wales have been developing their data to support implementation and support local authorities with their service planning

### **Next Steps**

Implementation of the removing profit elements of the 2025 Act will continue at pace over the coming years. Our intention is to bring the relevant parts of the legislation into effect so that, from 1 April 2026, no new providers of children's home, secure accommodation or fostering services can register with Care Inspectorate Wales and existing for-profit providers will not be able to add additional places or services to their registration. From 1 April 2027 existing for-profit providers will not be able to add any additional beds or foster carers to their registration and from 1 April 2030 placements into for-profit children's home, secure accommodation or fostering services will not be permitted, apart from in exceptional circumstances.

**Joanne, who is a care-experienced young person, and a member of Voices from Care Cymru said:** "Knowing that this is now law makes me feel proud as I know that private profits won't be made from care experienced young people in the future. The money now will be reinvested for us to thrive and become the people that we want to be.

“These processes didn’t happen overnight, and it took a lot of time and hard work from us as young people, but we were not going to give up. We will keep working hard to make the care system a better place for children and young people.”

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable.</b>
--------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Background

We are committed to ensuring that where safe and appropriate, children and young people who cannot remain with their families are cared for as close to home as possible.

Care experienced children and young people may have unresolved trauma from their childhood experiences that can present through difficulties in regulating their emotions and behaviour and forming relationships. If their trauma is not addressed it can result in multiple placement breakdowns, culminating in a secure home or specialist placement often based far from home. Early intervention is crucial to break this cycle with a therapeutic, trauma informed approach that ensures better outcomes for the child.

In 2022/23, an additional £3.5m of Integrated Care Fund revenue funding was provided to the Regional Partnership Boards to test integrated regional solutions. The funding contributed to the completion of 15 initiatives, which resulted in:

- Creation of 26 new beds for children with complex needs.
- Support was provided to 62 children and young people with complex needs.

Due to the problems accessing suitable therapeutic accommodation, in 2023 we undertook a review of residential services and implemented a more robust monitoring framework to gather information about therapeutic homes being developed in each area. This helped us to identify and follow developments from design concept to a capital building stage through to operational.

Before April 2023, local authorities in Wales worked from a baseline of 20 inhouse residential homes providing 93 beds for children with complex needs. Insufficiency problems resulted in later interventions frequently at crisis stage and over-reliance on privately-run expensive services far away.

We have continued to invest in the development of therapeutic residential services through the Housing with Care Fund, Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund, the Regional Integration Fund and the Eliminate Profit Fund.



The children's homes have a homely feel, and the interventions are needs-led, trauma informed and specialist, to aid behavioural regulation and prevent escalation of needs, working with families to promote reunification.

In addition, we established a Good Practice Forum with a large membership across the sector, contributing to a good practice toolkit. This group has helped to define complex needs as:

- Severe emotional, behavioural and mental health needs, which may exist alongside high-end physical needs.
- Children and young people may not have a mental health diagnosis but find difficulty in self-regulating their emotions, which can translate in distressing, disruptive, antisocial and uncooperative behaviours, and high stress and anxiety.
- This may include children and young people with a learning disability, awaiting a mental health diagnosis or a neurodivergent diagnosis.

From April 2023 to date, 39 inhouse residential homes have become operational with an additional 128 beds for children and young people with complex needs. A few examples of these therapeutic homes include:

Goleudy in Cardiff is a multi-disciplinary team able to therapeutically hold the child and understand the child's behaviours. It is trauma informed, formulation driven and attachment focused. The service supports the development of bespoke homes as solo placements for children with the highest needs.

Ty Nyth in Mold is a tri-funded initiative between Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council and Betsy Cadwaladr University Health Board. Children and young people are taught Dialectical Behavioural Therapy skills to aid self-regulation. They also work with families where reunification is safe, to identify the challenges and drivers for behaviours.



Golygfa'r Dolydd in Bridgend focuses on early intervention after 3 placement breakdowns, with on-site clinical supervision. The model is based on behavioural science, acknowledging the experienced trauma and how that plays out daily. This seeks to repair missed experiences or skills and to start repairing the detachment difficulties.

Social Care Wales has supported consistency of therapeutic approaches by leading a national roll-out of DDP-PACE training, working in partnership with local authority teams. This has been developed into an expanded offer, providing clinical supervision to new teams and managers working to embed therapeutic support into their delivery of care

## Next Steps

We are continuing to invest in therapeutic homes for children and young people with complex needs. There are 16 inhouse homes currently in development which will deliver 67 beds in the next 12 months, and a further 18 homes with 73 beds are in the planning stage.

The Good Practice Forum will continue with a programme of sector relevant topics and is developing the good practice toolkit in collaboration with ExChange. The toolkit will be a source for good practice guidance around the creation and delivery of therapeutic homes.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment:</b>	<b>Strengthen public bodies in their role as corporate parents.</b>
---------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------

## **Background**

During this Sixth Senedd term, we have been working to deliver the Programme for Government commitment to “Strengthen public bodies in their role as corporate parents”.

The importance of corporate parents is explained in the following quote from a care-experienced young person – “So we need Wales to support us, to believe in us, to help us grow and become the happy adults we want to be”.

### Strengthening Corporate Parenting

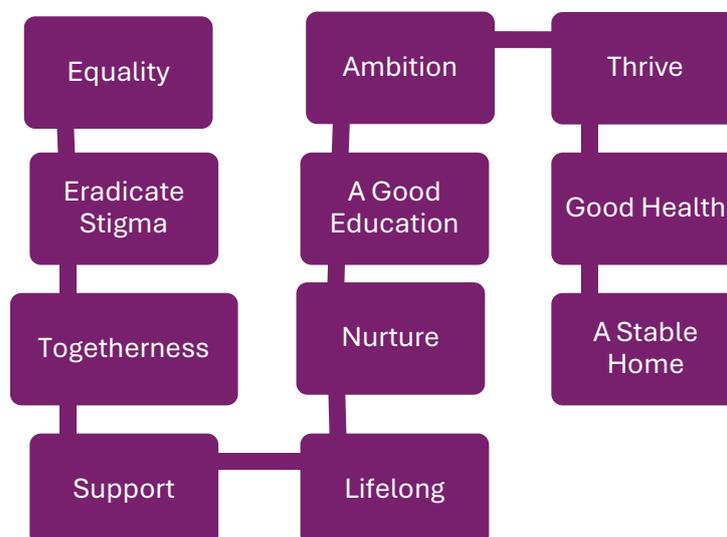
A Corporate Parenting Implementation Group was set up to take forward two deliverables in support of this commitment. The Group’s membership includes representatives for organisations such as Voices from Care Cymru, the Children’s Commissioner’s office, the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), Children in Wales, National Adoption Service, and Public Health Wales. Input has also been received from care experienced young people through Voices from Care Cymru

The Group agreed on two deliverables they were a Corporate Parenting Charter and strengthened statutory guidance through Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked after and accommodated children) under the Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

### Corporate Parenting Charter

The Implementation Group explored the most effective way to improve consistency of corporate parenting across Wales. Working collaboratively with care-experienced young people the Group developed a set of 11 “corporate parenting principles” and 9 promises with the intention that all public bodies across Wales could sign up to these principles and promises and become “corporate parents”. The Group agreed that these principles and promises should be formed into a Charter and hence they were formed into the “Corporate Parenting Charter – A Promise from Wales”.

The 11 principles of corporate parenting align to the United Nations Convention on the Rights for the Child (UNCRC) and are:



In developing these principles, the Group recognised these were principles which could be delivered not just by local authorities but also wider public bodies, third sector organisations and private organisations. Therefore, the Charter was given voluntary status and is currently open to all public sector bodies, private sector and third sector organisations to sign up and become corporate parents.

The [Corporate Parenting Charter](#) was first published on 29 June 2023 and had its full public launch on 22 September 2023. On the launch day the then First Minister Mark Drakeford MS and Deputy Minister for Social Services Julie Morgan MS signed the Charter on behalf of Welsh Ministers. On the day the Permanent Secretary Andrew Goodall also signed the Charter on behalf of Welsh Government.

A full list of the organisations signed up so far can be found on the Welsh Government website at: [Organisations who are-corporate-parents-html](#)

### Delivering Corporate Parenting

We wanted to provide an identity for corporate parenting in Wales. The Corporate Parenting Badge below was developed working with care-experienced young people and is the symbol provided to all new corporate parents on sign up.



## **Rhianta Corfforaethol Cymru Corporate Parenting Wales**

### Corporate Parenting Pledges

Working with young people, a pledge template was developed which invited organisations signing up to indicate which of the corporate parenting principles it would be working to deliver or its work closely aligned to. The pledge template also asks organisations to outline their offer of support to care-experienced children and young people.

Together with the pledge template, and showing how corporate parenting is cross sector, a welcome letter from the First Minister was developed and is issued to every new organisation signing up.

Young people will review a sample of these pledges and provide feedback to organisations.

### Corporate Parenting Toolkit

The Corporate Parenting Implementation Group, in collaboration with care-experienced young people, developed the Corporate Parenting toolkit: [What does it mean to become a corporate parent? | GOV.WALES](#).

The intention is to review the toolkit on a regular basis to keep it live for new organisations and build on the good work taking place across Wales.

### Raising awareness of Corporate Parenting in Wales

Raising awareness of corporate parenting across Wales has seen the understanding and awareness grow amongst new sectors across Wales.

In November 2025, linking with Care Leavers Awareness Month we launched our new animation video targeting all organisations to thinking about signing out.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/3a4n1BCRNoY>

We have developed a video working with care-experienced young people and Careers Wales to promote the Charter and its importance to young people.

As part of this work, we are working with the 4cs Young Commissioners Group who are developing a young person's version of the Charter.

### First Corporate Parenting Good practice event



On 20 February 2025, the first Corporate Parenting Wales best practice event took place. The event was an opportunity for prospective corporate parents to get more information on what was expected of them, and current corporate parents could also understand how they could refine their pledges. A variety of stakeholders attended, including local authority representatives, NHS Wales representatives, fostering networks, the education sector, third sector organisations and care-experienced young people.

It was the discussion led by the care experienced young people about the importance of corporate parenting to them which hit home for attendees. Young people spoke bravely and frankly about abject failures during their time in care. They reflected on their hope that this Charter will challenge and change the landscape for care experienced children and young people, with a plea that not only do organisations listen to the voice of the child but also deliver on their corporate parenting pledges.

With emotive talks from care experienced young people and insightful talks about how Bridgend college and the Fostering Network are embedding and performing their duties, it was an extremely successful day that shed light on how other organisations could make their pledges happen.

## Strengthened statutory guidance through Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked after and accommodated children) under the Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

We have started work to strengthen the guidance for local authorities within the Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked after and accommodated children) under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. A 12-week public consultation on the proposed changes took place in 2025. The intention is for a revised Code of Practice to be laid in 2026.

Our aim with the work on the revised Code, alongside developing the corporate parenting chapter is to strengthen the voice of the child within care and support planning and placements; and to respond to the recommendations from care experienced children on undertaking placement moves and review meetings as outlined in the Lwc report and feedback from the annual Care Experienced Summits.

### **Next Steps**

#### Community of practice

Building on the success of our first best practice in February 2025, we will be establishing a Corporate Parenting Community of Practice. This share examples of good practice and be open to all organisations who have signed up to the Charter, or those who have shown an interest and would like to know more. We aim to hold the first meeting in Spring 2026.

#### Development of additional toolkits and resources

Linking in with the Community of Practice and the revised Code of Practice and feedback received, we will be working with stakeholders to develop additional toolkits to support good practice across Wales.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care.</b>
--------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Background

During the sixth Senedd term Welsh Government has been working to deliver the Programme for Government Commitment- Prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care. This demonstrated a commitment from Welsh Government to supporting families at risk of breakdown, particularly where children were considered to be at the edge of care.

Funding parental advocacy services has promoted a rights-based approach to ensure parents are empowered to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their families.

Parental advocacy has emerged as a key component of the Welsh Government's preventative strategy within children's social services. It reflects a shift in focus from reactive interventions to proactive support for families at risk of breakdown, particularly those on the edge of care. Historically, parents navigating the social care system have faced significant barriers to understanding their rights, engaging with professionals, and influencing decisions about their children. Advocacy services aim to address these challenges by providing independent, rights-based support that empowers parents to participate meaningfully in statutory processes.

The inclusion of parental advocacy in the Programme for Government 2021–2026 marks a significant policy commitment to supporting families through early, preventative measures. It also responds to recommendations from the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee, which called for statutory rights to intensive, wrap-around support for care-experienced birth parents, including specialist advocacy.

### Action delivered against the commitment:

Parental Advocacy has been rolled out nationally. Between three providers, National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru and Parental Advocacy Network (PAN) each region in Wales has access to parental advocacy support for parents engaged in child protection procedures.

### Examples of collaboration:

The support of parental advocacy in child protection cases allows positive collaboration between parents and professionals, bridging any gaps between service users and social workers, health care professionals, education professional etc.

In addition to 1:1 professional parental advocacy, peer advocacy has been taken place. Peer advocacy and peer support groups empower parents through shared experience, building confidence and supporting one another to access resources, it also helps to address issues around loneliness and isolation that can often be prevalent when working with agencies on a child protection basis.

Through the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant, this Senedd term Welsh Government has provided funding to Project Unity. Project Unity is a NYAS Cymru run all-Wales project, designed to break the cycle of children being born to care experienced young mothers entering the care system. They provide person centered intensive support, financial and housing advice, formal advocacy, promoting rights and entitlements and creating education and training opportunities. As part of Project Unity young women on the project can also get involved in projects with other young women with similar experiences. The project also provides workshops on healthy relationships.

## **Next Steps**

Whilst significant progress has been made in embedding parental advocacy services across Wales there is still further work to ensure the full benefits of these services are felt by families that need the support, thus helping reduce the numbers of children who become looked after.

Parental advocacy plays a pivotal role in empowering parents and supporting parents, we continue to support this service and are exploring ways to ensure that consistent offers of parental advocacy and support are available across Wales. To do this, the next stage of work should include:

- Establishing a clear criterion and a national framework for access to parental advocacy across Wales.
- Expand parent peer mentoring across all regions in Wales.
- Continue to fund and support parental advocacy services in Wales.
- Establish a national forum for parental advocacy which will include the voice of parents to inform future thinking and developments.

A clear criterion for accessing parental advocacy services will ensure parents who are eligible for the support of an advocate are able to access the service.

Further to this the expansion of peer advocacy support groups will ensure that there is a space for parents to connect with other parents who may share similar lived experiences. These projects have benefits such as reducing loneliness and isolation, whilst building a feeling of belonging which can in turn help parents who are experiencing difficulties to build positive support networks.

Parental feedback is imperative to service delivery and development. Whilst data is useful to understand the numbers of parents who have received support, we will actively seek qualitative feedback and lived experiences to ensure the support is tailored to the evolving needs of parents and families in this space.

These actions will capitalise on the positive progress of implementing parental advocacy across Wales and seek to further embed a supportive, empowering way of

working with children and families in order to safely support more children to remain living at home and reduce the numbers of looked after children in Wales.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.</b>
--------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Background

We are committed to supporting vulnerable families with complex needs to remain together and local authority edge of care services play a vital role in supporting these families.

The Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund (the RIF) is a 5-year fund worth £146.8m to deliver a programme of change through the Regional Partnership Boards until March 2027. This aims to develop integrated care models, including a focus on ‘supporting families to stay together safely and therapeutic support for care experienced children with complex needs.

We invested over £14m in 2022/23 rising to nearly £23m in subsequent years, which helped support around 6,500 children per year by providing a range of services including:

- Adolescence Resource Centre or ARC in Cardiff which provides intensive therapeutic support to young people over 11 and their families who are at risk of breakdown. This service offers integrated support in partnership with health, education, the youth service and housing. It has developed programmes based on enhancing the strengths within the family and assessing the motivation for change.
- My Support Team or MyST in Gwent provides specialised mental health services to children and young people aged up to 21 in the Gwent region, who are looked after or involved with children’s social care and have complex mental health needs arising from early and compounded trauma. Post support 100% children reported feeling less isolated.
- Magu, Baby in Mind and Camau Babi are prenatal services in the Cwm Taff area supporting parents and family members of babies who are at risk of becoming looked after. The parents’ views are sought and captured through the completion of ‘what matters to me’ and revisited regularly through a ‘where am I now – reflection tool’. The parent self-identified outcomes are reviewed, and all support plans are tailored to the individual needs. These have resulted in reductions in child-to-parent violence and enhanced educational integration, with over 80% of the babies remaining with their families.
- Pembrokeshire Edge of Care service takes families on a change journey by setting achievable goals within safety planning. It uses an outcome focused approach to record success and areas for development whilst evidencing the change families make. The ‘Routines, Boundaries and Positive Parenting’ and the ‘Household Conditions and Family Conflict/Relationship’ are the most requested. Post-intervention 75% of children have remained with their family.

- Resilient Families Teams in North Wales deliver intensive interventions to families where there is a risk of children or young people being removed due to parental mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, neglect or emotional harm, or inappropriate parenting of a child with neurological or mental health condition. Families can access a range of interventions, such as the Freedom or 'Own My Life' courses for victims of domestic violence, Family group conference (FGC) and healthy relationships for young people at risk of exploitation or harm. As a result, 94% of children remained at home, 97% had no further arrests, 100% were in school or working, and 88% had reduced substance abuse.

The insights gained from implementing these services has helped to define our National Practice Guidance for therapeutic support for care experienced children which was published in April 2025 alongside the National Multi Agency framework for children's services.

### The NYTH/NEST framework

The NEST framework provides a structure and shared set of principles for creating a whole system approach to mental health and wellbeing for babies, children and young people. The framework is being implemented throughout the wide system in health, social care, education and third sector through training and self-assessment and the sharing of good practice. Good practice example [videos](#) were recently published, which include projects working with those on the edge of care.

The Supporting Families and NEST Community of Practice has brought together a wide range of practitioners across Wales involved in areas such as early help, family support, mental health and wellbeing, domestic violence, substance misuse, edge of care, perinatal, transition into adulthood, education, play, youthwork, sport, safeguarding and therapeutic care services.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Legacy of Care - Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in Wales</b>
--------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## **Background**

The Welsh Government is committed to upholding the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC), recognising their unique vulnerabilities and the need for a compassionate, rights-based approach to care and protection. This commitment is central to Wales' ambition to become a Nation of Sanctuary - a country where those fleeing conflict, persecution, and hardship are welcomed and supported to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

UASC often arrive in Wales alone, having endured traumatic journeys and facing complex legal, emotional, and social challenges. The Welsh Government recognises that these children require not only immediate safeguarding but also long-term, tailored support to help them thrive. This recognition is embedded within wider policy frameworks, including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the Nation of Sanctuary Action Plan, and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, which collectively aim to ensure that all children, regardless of background, receive care that is consistent, equitable, and child-centred.

Over the Sixth Senedd Term, the Welsh Government worked in close partnership with local authorities, third-sector organisations, and UK Government departments to deliver a programme that strengthened social services, enhanced professional guidance and emotional support resources, and improved age assessment practices.

### Building Foundations of Support

The journey began with a clear recognition that UASC face unique challenges - legal uncertainty, emotional trauma, and the need for culturally sensitive care. In response, the Welsh Government commissioned the Children's Legal Centre Wales to produce child-friendly guides outlining the rights and entitlements of asylum-seeking children. These guides, translated into 12 languages, became a cornerstone of accessible information for young people and their carers, ensuring that no child was left without understanding their rights in Wales.

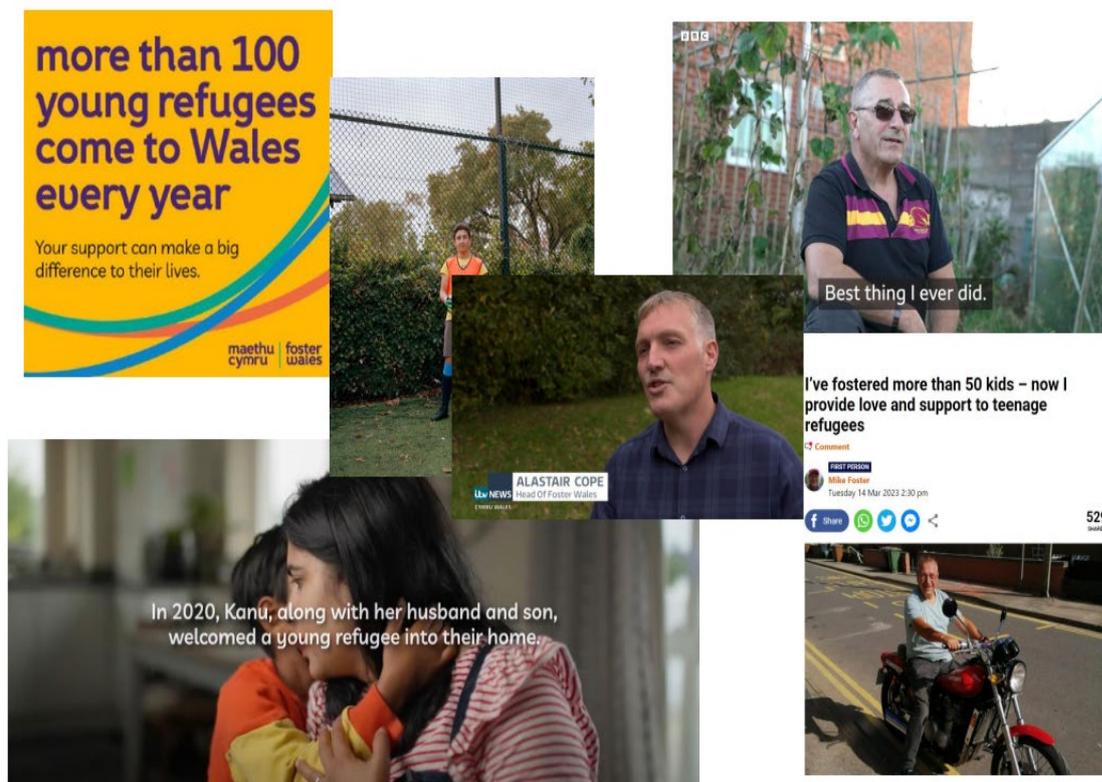
In collaboration with the Children's Legal Centre Wales, the Welsh Government published guidance in 2021 for foster carers and social workers supporting UASC. This guidance aimed to enhance understanding of the unique needs and experiences of these children, ensuring professionals are equipped to provide informed, compassionate, and rights-based care.

## Creating Safe and Supportive Homes

Recognising the importance of stable, nurturing environments, Foster Wales launched a national campaign in September 2022 to recruit foster carers specifically for young refugees. This initiative, aligned with the Nation of Sanctuary vision, mobilised all 22 local authorities to provide clear pathways for individuals wishing to support UASC through fostering. The campaign not only raised awareness but also strengthened the infrastructure for care placements across Wales.

### **Young Refugee Campaign: Highlights**

---



[you can help a young refugee - foster wales \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/you-can-help-a-young-refugee-foster-wales)

## Strengthening Professional Practice

Age assessment is a critical and sensitive process in the support of UASC. To ensure consistency and fairness, the Welsh Government developed and published an Age Assessment Toolkit in June 2021. This resource provided social workers and local authority staff with practical guidance, helping them navigate complex assessments with confidence and compassion.

## Responding to Global Crises with Compassion

The war in Ukraine presented an urgent humanitarian challenge. In response, the Welsh Government worked closely with the Home Office to design a bespoke scheme allowing unaccompanied children from Ukraine to settle safely in Wales. This included coordinated efforts to provide safeguarding, accommodation, and tailored emotional and practical support.

Building on this, the Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched in June 2022, with Wales-specific guidance published in August 2022 to support its delivery.

### Navigating Legislative Change

The introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Migration Act brought significant challenges. The Welsh Government laid Legislative Consent Memoranda (LCMs) for both Bills, raising serious concerns about the use of scientific methods in age assessments, the centralisation of responsibilities, and the potential erosion of children's rights.

The Senedd refused consent, citing incompatibility with Welsh law and international obligations. These decisions underscored Wales' commitment to safeguarding the rights of children and maintaining devolved responsibilities.

### Investing in the Future

Financial investment has been a key enabler of progress. Through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Welsh Government provided £200,000 annually to support the implementation of the National Transfer Scheme, including training for foster carers and placement support for UASC with complex needs.

An additional £175,000 per year was allocated to deliver targeted and tailored support that helps these young people transition successfully into adulthood.

### Collaborative Working and Innovation

Partnerships have been central to success. In 2022, the Welsh Government funded the Children's Legal Centre to produce multilingual films explaining asylum processes. This collaborative project involved youth groups, legal professionals, and university students, demonstrating the power of cross-sector engagement.

In July 2024, the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership convened a workshop to explore the potential for a guardianship scheme for UASC. This initiative reflects a forward-looking ambition to enhance statutory support and ensure every child has a dedicated advocate.

### **Next Steps**

As we look to the future, the Welsh Government remains committed to strengthening support for UASC. We will explore how various components of a guardianship scheme could complement and enhance existing statutory responsibilities across Wales, ensuring that every child receives dedicated advocacy, continuity of care, and holistic support tailored to their individual needs.

Welsh Government will continue to engage closely with the UK Government's Immigration White Paper, Restoring Control over the Immigration System, to ensure that forthcoming reforms fully reflect the rights and needs of UASC in Wales. As proposals around settlement routes, qualifying periods, and wider system changes

develop, including the introduction of Facial Age Estimation technology within age assessment processes, we will work proactively to assess their implications and advocate for approaches aligned with our statutory duties, safeguarding principles, and children's rights.

While the subsequent Fairer Pathway to Settlement consultation signals an intention to undertake targeted engagement on pathways for children in care and care leavers, we will maintain a clear focus on influencing the overarching White Paper commitments as they translate into policy and legislation. Through sustained partnership working, evidence gathering, and early identification of risks, we will continue to seek assurances that any future settlement and age assessment frameworks are evidence-based, ethically sound, and fully protect the dignity, privacy, welfare, and long-term security of these vulnerable young people.

Above all, Welsh Government will remain committed to upholding the rights and welfare of UASC, ensuring their interests are clearly represented through our continued engagement in the UK Government's UASC Taskforce and our wider work to influence policy development in line with devolved responsibilities.

As Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden affirmed:

*"We want a Wales where every child knows that they have rights, understands what they mean and has support to be able to exercise them. What young people have to say is important and their opinions matter."*

This enduring commitment to compassion, collaboration, and child-centred care will continue to guide Wales's approach to welcoming and supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, ensuring they are given every opportunity to thrive.

<b>Programme for Government Commitment</b>	<b>Foster Wales - Strengthening Public Fostering in Wales</b>
--------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------

## Background

The 2021-2026 Senedd term has been a pivotal period for children’s social care in Wales, marked by bold reform and renewed ambition. At the heart of this transformation is Foster Wales, the national network of 22 local authority fostering services, launched in July 2021 to unify and strengthen public fostering provision. Its mission - to ensure children in care are supported within their communities by carers who are part of a not-for-profit, locally accountable system. This work builds on the foundations laid by the National Fostering Framework (NFF) during the previous Senedd term, which set out a vision for a more consistent, collaborative, and child-centred approach to fostering across Wales.



*“No child in Wales should be without a home and someone to look after them... I encourage anyone who can to open their home so that those children who need our help can live happier childhoods and grow up into the people they want to be.” - Julie Morgan, the former Deputy Minister for Social Services, Foster Wales Open Door campaign launch”*

Foster Wales has worked in close alignment with the Welsh Government’s Transformation Programme for Children’s Social Care, which aims to reshape the care system through trauma-informed, relationship-based practice. Central to this vision is the commitment to eliminate private profit from the care of looked-after children - a goal Foster Wales has actively advanced by offering a robust public alternative to for-profit fostering agencies.



### Welsh Government Investment

Throughout the 2021-2026 Senedd term, Welsh Government has provided significant financial support to Foster Wales, investing over £9.1 million to strengthen public fostering provision across Wales. This funding has supported the development of the national infrastructure, branding, recruitment campaigns, and strategic initiatives aimed at rebalancing foster care away from profit-driven models. The investment reflects a shared commitment to building a consistent, ethical, and child-centred fostering system, and lays the foundation for continued collaboration and progress in the years ahead.

### **Key Achievements**

#### Establishing a National Identity

Before 2021, fostering services operated independently across Wales. The creation of Foster Wales brought these services together under a unified brand and shared purpose. This national identity enabled consistent messaging, streamlined recruitment, and fostered a stronger sense of community among carers. Public awareness rose significantly from just 6% at launch to 23% by 2025, reflecting the success of coordinated campaigns and outreach.

#### Recruitment and Retention

Foster Wales has made measurable progress in attracting and retaining foster carers:

- Enquiries increased from 1,444 in 2021 to 1,906 in 2024/25.

- Assessment allocations rose from 206 to 271.
- Approvals of mainstream carers grew from 113 to 151.
- The net loss of carers reduced from - 69 to -16, indicating improved retention.

These figures reflect growing public interest and enhanced support for carers, reversing long-standing recruitment challenges.

### Driving Innovation

Foster Wales has introduced several initiatives that have reshaped the fostering experience:

- **The National Commitment:** A consistent core offer for all foster carers, including kinship carers, ensuring equitable support and recognition.
- **The Big Welcome:** A digital tool allowing children to view carer profiles before placement, easing transitions and building trust.
- **Award-Winning Campaigns:** “Bring Something to the Table” challenged stereotypes and won Best Public Sector Campaign at the CIPR Awards.
- **Care Friends App:** A pioneering recruitment tool rewarding carers for referrals.
- **Learning and Development Framework:** National training resources have empowered carers with confidence and skills.
- **Fostering Wellbeing Programme:** Expanded peer mentoring and emotional support networks across Wales.

### Reviewing Foster Carer Allowances

During this Senedd term, Welsh Government, working in partnership with Foster Wales, has commenced a review of foster carer allowances to ensure they more accurately reflect the true cost of providing care. This joint initiative represents a significant step toward recognising the financial realities faced by carers and ensuring that support is both fair and sustainable. While the National Commitment has begun to address consistency across Wales, this review marks the beginning of a longer journey - one that will require continued collaboration, engagement with carers, and evidence-based refinement. Together, Welsh Government and Foster Wales are committed to developing a financial framework that values carers appropriately and supports the long-term stability and quality of foster placements.

## **Opportunities for the Future**

### Systemic Reform

The Welsh Government’s commitment to removing profit from children’s care presents a transformative opportunity. Foster Wales, rooted in local authority values, is well-placed to lead this shift toward a more ethical, community-based model.

## Digital Innovation

Tools like The Big Welcome and Care Friends have demonstrated the potential of technology to enhance the fostering journey. Expanding digital solutions can further improve placement experiences and recruitment.

## Workforce Development

Continued investment in training and support for foster carers will strengthen their skills, build confidence, and improve outcomes for children. It will also help attract new carers who see fostering as a valued and well-supported role within the care system.

## Public Engagement

With public awareness rising, Foster Wales has a strong platform to deepen community engagement, challenge misconceptions, and recruit carers who reflect the diversity of children in care.

## Risks and Challenges

Despite progress, several challenges remain:

- **Recruitment Gaps:** Demand still exceeds supply, especially for carers of sibling groups, teenagers, and children with complex needs.
- **Financial Pressures:** The cost-of-living crisis and regional disparities in allowances may deter potential carers.
- **Public Misconceptions:** Persistent myths about who can foster limit recruitment.
- **Placement Stability:** Unplanned endings continue to affect children's wellbeing.
- **Regional Variability:** Differences in local authority practices can lead to inconsistent experiences.

Addressing these issues requires sustained investment, strategic action, and continued collaboration.

## **Next Steps**

As Foster Wales enters its next phase, the emphasis must evolve from consolidation to growth, innovation, and deeper engagement. The following strategic priorities should shape its future development:

- **Continue to grow the local authority foster carer community** with a particular focus on developing models of care to meet the varied needs of children and young people who require foster care placements.
- **Embed and enhance the National Commitment consistently across Wales**, ensuring it remains responsive to the evolving needs of carers and children to support their wellbeing.

- **Strengthen learning and development opportunities**, helping carers feel connected, supported, and resilient in their role.
- **Continue the use of digital tools** for recruiting foster carers and to support placing children and young people, widening this where opportunities arise.
- **Improve data collection and evaluation**, enabling evidence-informed decisions that enhance policy, practice, and outcomes.

Foster Wales has shown what is possible when services collaborate, innovate, and place children at the centre of their mission. The achievements of this Senedd term - rising recruitment, improved retention, national consistency, and award-winning campaigns, are a testament to the dedication of carers, local teams, and national leadership.

With continued investment and innovation, Foster Wales can build on this legacy, ensuring every child in Wales not only receives care, but is truly cared about.

# National Adoption Service - A Decade of Progress, A Term of Transformation

## Background

The Sixth Senedd term has been a defining chapter in the evolution of adoption services in Wales. Guided by the Welsh Government's vision for a more compassionate and child-centred social care system, the National Adoption Service (NAS) has delivered a programme of transformation that places identity, connection, and lifelong support at the heart of adoption.

NAS entered this Senedd term with a strong foundation, having already established itself as a collaborative, nationally coordinated service. Over the past five years, it has accelerated its impact, modernising practice, deepening support, and amplifying the voices of those with lived experience.

From pioneering digital platforms to embedding therapeutic models of care, NAS has redefined what adoption looks like in Wales. It is no longer just a legal process, it is a lifelong journey supported by a community of professionals, families, and young people.

## Key Achievements

### Improved Adoption Outcomes

Despite wider changes in children's services aimed at keeping families together, NAS has continued to ensure timely and appropriate placements for children who need adoption:

- Nearly 1,000 children adopted during the term.
- Placement times reduced from 12.8 months to 9.5 months, reflecting improved efficiency and child-centred planning.
- Since its inception in June 2018, the Adopting Together scheme placed 30 children, including those with complex needs and sibling groups, using a therapeutically informed model.

### Strategic Investment and Innovation

NAS's transformation was underpinned by strategic investment from Welsh Government:

- £2.3 million in annual core funding and £2.33 million in additional funding over three years supported the Adopt Cymru 2025 plan.
- The Adoption Support Commitment, launched in 2022, set a new standard for lifelong support.
- The National Adoption Register and NAS App improved data management and professional access to guidance.

## Marketing and Recruitment

NAS reshaped public perceptions of adoption through bold, inclusive campaigns:

- **The Choose Family** campaign won national awards and along with the **Now is a Good Time** campaign increased engagement.
- The **Truth Be Told** podcast series gave voice to real adoption stories, including a youth-led episode.
- Survey data revealed that 83% of people in Wales view adoption positively, with growing awareness of the need for trauma-informed care.

## Adoption Support

Support for families has expanded significantly:

- Since the start of 2022, there has been 788 new adoption support assessments undertaken across Wales (figures up to June 2025), with the number of children waiting for an assessment steadily reducing.
- At the end of 2024/25, NAS was supporting over 1,600 active adoption support arrangements, delivered both through formal assessments and informal arrangements via Pathways and Connected services.
- Regional hubs and peer-led initiatives offered tailored, accessible support.
- Services delivered at a competitive cost - under £3k per family.

## Identity and Lifelong Connection

NAS has prioritised identity and connection as central to adoption:

- Over 4,000 children supported to maintain contact with birth families through both direct and indirect arrangements.
- Life Journey Work embedded nationally, with 75% of children receiving materials by matching panel stage.
- New guidance and toolkits helped professionals assess and support contact arrangements.

## Early Permanence

The Wales Early Permanence Framework has changed the landscape of care planning:

- Enabled 15+ placements with dual-approved carers.
- Reduced placement moves and supported emotional stability.
- Training for professionals and judiciary embedded early permanence principles.

## Workplace Support

Recognising the role of employers in supporting adopters:

- The Adoption in Your Business Employer Toolkit launched in 2023.
- Endorsed by Welsh Government and major employers, it offers practical guidance for workplace support.

## Policy and Practice Modernisation

NAS has led the way in modernising adoption practice:

- All-Wales policies and procedures now accessible via the NAS website and App.
- Good Practice Guides developed for key areas including birth parent engagement, contact, transitions and adoption support. Followed most recently with guidance around Family Finding and building new families.
- Safeguarding guidance and e-learning modules supported professional development.

## Governance and Infrastructure

In 2023, NAS strengthened its governance model:

- All 22 local authorities signed a new Joint Committee agreement.
- Integration with Foster Wales through a combined Central Team and national performance frameworks enhanced oversight and accountability.
- Cardiff Council formalised hosting arrangements, and a revised Information Sharing Protocol was issued.

## Co-Production and Youth Engagement

Young people and families have shaped NAS's journey:

- Launch of Adoption Youth Councils, connected services across Wales and the Connect Cymru platform.
- Annual Big Adoption Conversation events fostered dialogue and innovation.
- Youth Council ambassadors now sit on the NAS governance board, ensuring lived experience informs decision-making.

*"I truly believe your voices and learning from your experiences of adoption should be at the centre of all we do."*

— Julie Morgan, Former Deputy Minister for Social Services



## Acknowledging the Past

In 2023, the Welsh Government issued a formal apology for historic forced adoption practices. NAS responded with compassion and action:

- Launch of the Pre-1976 Birth Records and Intermediary Service.
- Co-produced guidance and support for those seeking access to records.
- A national subgroup now oversees improvements in record access and trauma-informed care.

*“To all the victims... you had to endure such appalling historical practices. For this I am truly sorry.”*

**Julie Morgan, Former Deputy Minister for Social Services**

## Celebrating 10 Years of NAS

In 2024/25, NAS celebrated its tenth anniversary:

- Over 3,100 children adopted into 2,500 families since its inception.
- Events and statements from Ministers marked this milestone and reaffirmed NAS’s commitment to excellence.

*“It is that shared commitment to excellence that has made the National Adoption Service a success.”*

**Dawn Bowden, Minister for Children and Social Care**



## **Next Steps**

The legacy of this Senedd term is one of transformation, resilience, and compassion. NAS has laid the groundwork for continued progress, with future priorities including:

- Expanding support for older adopted young people.
- Enhancing contact arrangements and access to records.
- Improving recruitment and training for adopters.
- Repositioning adoption as a positive permanence option.

The transformation of adoption services in Wales during the sixth Senedd term is a testament to what can be achieved through strategic leadership, co-production, and a commitment to children's wellbeing. NAS has not only delivered change, it has built a legacy of hope, connection, and lifelong support.

## **Kinship Care – Building Family-Based Alternatives to Care**

During the Sixth Senedd Term, the Welsh Government made a deliberate and strategic shift in how kinship care was understood and supported. No longer treated as a peripheral issue, kinship care was embedded at the heart of the transformation programme for children’s services. This was driven by a clear vision: “*the right home, for the right child, at the right time, with the right support.*”

Kinship carers, often grandparents, siblings, or extended family members, step in during moments of crisis to provide children with stability, familiarity, and love. Yet for too long, they remained invisible within the care system.

Ministers publicly acknowledged the growing number of children placed in kinship arrangements and committed to ensuring support was based on the needs of the child and the role of the carer, not their legal status. This cultural shift was reflected in policy, funding, and practice development.

Kinship care is recognised as a fundamental and valued component of the care system - not a secondary option, but a central pillar in delivering safe and stable homes for children.

### **Background**

Kinship care has become an increasingly vital part of the Welsh care landscape. Families stepping in to care for children often do so without preparation, support, or recognition. The Welsh Government responded by embedding kinship care into its wider reform agenda, ensuring that these carers were no longer overlooked but recognised as essential partners in delivering safe, stable, and loving homes.

This shift was not just about policy; it was about changing the narrative. Kinship carers were placed at the centre of efforts to build a more compassionate, integrated, and child-focused care system.

### **The plan to take forward and the Governance set up to support delivery:**

Governance and delivery were supported through:

- Integration of kinship care into the Foster Wales National Commitment, ensuring parity across all 22 local authorities.
- Oversight by the Improving Outcomes for Children Team within Welsh Government.
- Strategic collaboration with AFKA Cymru, which led the Kinship and Special Guardianship Special Interest Group - a national forum for shaping policy and practice.
- Inclusion of kinship care in national consultations, regulatory reform, and advisory groups.

### Action delivered against the commitment:

- Regulatory reform introduced a dedicated kinship foster carer category, with tailored assessment criteria and flexible care planning.
- Kinship carers were included in the Foster Wales National Commitment, gaining access to training, peer support, and recognition.
- Preparation / permanency training was developed for both Kinship and Special Guardians, which provided information and advice about contact with birth family, life journey work to ensure better placement outcomes.
- A comprehensive review of fostering allowances was launched to ensure financial equity.
- The Special Guardianship Support Plan Template was developed and proposed for statutory use, ensuring consistency across Wales.
- Wallet-sized information cards for Special Guardians were distributed, empowering carers to explain their legal role to professionals.
- Online training for education professionals was developed to improve awareness and support for children in special guardianship arrangements.
- A new transfer protocol for kinship foster carers and Special Guardians was developed to help aid transitional moves to new local authority areas.

### Examples of collaboration:

- Co-production of support plan templates and practice guidance with AFKA Cymru and local authority practitioners.
- National rollout of kinship preparation training, covering trauma, attachment, contact, and legal processes.
- Development of practice notes and good practice guidance for social workers and carers.
- Engagement with education professionals to improve visibility and understanding of children in kinship and special guardianship arrangements.

### **Next Steps**

While significant progress has been made, challenges remain, particularly for informal kinship carers and those under Special Guardianship Orders. Many still face inconsistent access to support and limited statutory entitlements.

The next phase of reform must focus on:

- Conducting a comprehensive review of current entitlements across all kinship care arrangements to identify gaps and explore legislative and policy options for extending statutory support to informal carers and those under Special Guardianship Orders.
- Ensuring financial and practical support is equitable and accessible across Wales.
- Continuing investment in training, peer networks, and therapeutic services.
- Monitoring implementation and gathering feedback to inform future policy.

In addition, the Welsh Government has committed to working with the Law Commission on its Kinship Care project. This collaboration will explore legislative options to strengthen the legal framework around kinship care in England and Wales. This marks a significant step in aligning policy reform with legislative development.

This partnership with the Law Commission will help ensure that future reforms are grounded in robust legal analysis and reflect the lived experiences of kinship carers across Wales.

## Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, this report highlights the breadth of action which has taken place over the sixth Senedd term. Positive steps have been taken and the work this Senedd Term has built on the recommendations of the previous Improving Outcomes for Children Programme Ministerial Advisory Group and its legacy report.

The Transformation programme has been ambitious and wide reaching, involving short, medium and long-term projects designed to shape the future landscape for children's social services. As said earlier in this report the journey does not end here. The Transformation Delivery Group which includes care-experienced young people within its membership has carefully considered the progress made and has developed the following set of recommendations for the next Senedd with the aim of building the achievements made this term:

### **Recommendation 1: Corporate Parenting**

In the next Senedd term, the Corporate Parenting Charter should be progressed to ensure that all public sector organisations/services are signed up to the Charter and the Charter continues to be promoted to the third and private sectors.

Consideration should be given to the most effective mechanisms for ensuring:-

- consistent delivery on their corporate parenting responsibilities by key public sector organisations/services.
- effective support to enable organisations signing the Charter to deliver their pledges, and effective monitoring of the delivery of pledges.
- effective mechanisms for a consistent approach to ensuring the voice of care experienced children and young people is heard and acted upon when key public sector organisations/services are making corporate parenting decisions.

### **Recommendation 2: Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children**

Building on the work outlined in the Sixth Senedd term legacy report, explore what further packages of support can be taken forward to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people to help to protect Wales's status as a Nation of Sanctuary. These packages of support should be consistent across Wales and should be adequately resourced.

### **Recommendation 3: Removing Profit from Care**

Ensure there are clear plans to help local authorities develop services for children that meet the 'not-for-profit' legislative requirements. This includes supporting new care models, setting out a clear workforce strategy, and helping profit-making providers establish as not-for-profit. Ensure the legislation is implemented on schedule and closely monitored. Provide sufficient resources to support delivery and to improve value for money by creating a more stable market, reducing price volatility, and strengthening the link between cost, quality, and outcomes.

#### **Recommendation 4: National Multi-Agency Practice Framework for Children's Services**

As part of the implementation of the Multi-Agency Framework and building on the work taken forward around Vision 2030. Recommendations include:

- to ensure effective governance structures are in place.
- evidence of what works well is captured and rolled out as best practice.
- consideration of a Joint Accountability Framework so all agencies are delivering to the same objectives and understanding and will be jointly held to account.
- identify three specific areas to focus on and explore how multi-agency working can strengthen for example health and housing. This work would provide a template to use across services.

#### **Recommendation 5: Support for care leavers up to the age of 25**

Deliver the commitment to increase access to Personal Advisers (PA) for all care leavers up to the age of 25, review the role and demands of a PA so it aligns with the support needed for all care leavers; and review the guidance for social care and housing on changes introduced through legislation for care leavers in Wales.

#### **Recommendation 6: Early Intervention and Prevention Framework**

The Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) Framework is the first of its kind in the UK. Recommend that work is undertaken to ensure timely and effective national application of the Framework. This could include action to align the Framework with existing legislation and structures, exploration of new statutory guidance on EIP for practitioners, or legislation. Effective application will require sustainable commissioning arrangements.

#### **Recommendation 7: Radical Reform Summit Declaration**

The next Senedd, ensures that the Radical Reform Summit Declaration is further translated into delivery so there is evidence of implementation, and the Children and Young People's vision becomes a reality:

- New Ministers should meet care experienced children and young people to hear what they need from the new Cabinet and start developing relationships for the new Senedd term, with a view to securing new Ministers' commitment to the existing Radical Reform Declaration or starting the process of negotiating a new one
- Corporate Parenting Showcase be held in the Autumn of 2026 to introduce the concept of corporate parenting to new Members of the Senedd and Government Ministers
- The review of the Part 6 Code of Practice planned for the next Senedd term should consider the vision within the Declaration.

- Consideration should be given by other policy areas across Welsh Government on how the Declaration can be further integrated into guidance and legislation.

### **Recommendation 8: Vision for Children's Services in Wales**

The new Government should publish a vision for children's services in Wales, spanning across the whole journey for a child and family including early intervention and prevention through statutory processes and beyond. To support delivery a Ministerial Oversight Board and Delivery Group or similar structures should be established.

### **Recommendation 9: Support for Placements**

To strengthen support for placements through consideration of:

- the True Cost of Foster Care and parity for Kinship Care and Special Guardians through support and remuneration.
- Enhanced adoption support to prevent placement breakdowns should be put in place.
- Continue wider work to support and promote kinship care placements.
- Continue work to increase the number and diversity of foster carers.

### **Recommendation 10: Data and Metrics**

In the next Senedd term, the proposed performance metrics developed by the Data and Metrics subgroup should be developed into an annual report led by Welsh Government, which allows all stakeholders to understand and scrutinise the delivery of children's social care.

In making these recommendations the Transformation Delivery Group is acutely aware of the many other policy areas that impact greatly on care experienced children and young people. These include advocacy services, independent visiting, and safeguarding which includes support for children who go missing. We have not felt it appropriate to make recommendations around these specific topics, but we trust that the new Government will ensure there is synergy between all policy areas affecting the care-experienced community and the policy work developing these areas will continue.

**TRANSFORMATION DELIVERY GROUP  
FEBRUARY 2026**