



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Radical Reform Summit

DECLARATION

November 2025

In the years since devolution, successive Welsh Governments have prioritised the rights and needs of children and young people and there have been some major achievements. In 2001, in response to the Waterhouse Report, the office of the Children’s Commissioner was established; the first in the UK. In 2011 the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure was passed, partly enshrining The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Welsh law. In 2020 the Abolition of the Defence of Reasonable Punishment (Wales) Act was passed, giving children equal protection from violence under the law in our nation.

As a nation, Wales can be proud of these and other achievements but there is much more to do to allow our care experienced community to aspire and to achieve their full potential.

In 2021 the Programme for Government committed Welsh Ministers to exploring radical reform of services for care experienced children and young people and their families. Ministers determined that this exploration should begin with hearing the voices of the care experienced community.

They met care experienced Young Ambassadors at the first Radical Reform Summit in December 2022 and agreed the original Radical Reform Declaration, setting out a vision of what services will look and feel like to children and young people and their families.

Since then, Welsh Ministers and Young Ambassadors, have met on a number of occasions, keeping the voices of care experienced children and young people at the heart of the radical reform process. The updated version of the Vision in this new Declaration was agreed between Ministers and Young Ambassadors at the Summit in May 2025, and, after further discussion, signed by the First Minister in November 2025.

The Summit process has discussed steps necessary to promote the rights – based on the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child), (UNCRC) – and well-being of care experienced children and young people.



Background Statements

Welsh Government

In our Children and Young Peoples' Plan, this Welsh Government sets out our ambition:

'We want Wales to be a wonderful place to grow up, live and to work, now and in the future.'

The Plan goes on to say:

'We believe all our children and young people have the right to:

- Have the best start in life.
- Take part in and enjoy learning and have the best education possible to expand their knowledge, develop their creativity and fulfil their potential.
- Enjoy healthy lifestyles and be protected from harm, abuse, neglect, and discrimination.
- Be able to play and have fun.
- Be listened to and treated with respect.
- Have a home and a community that is a nice place to grow up.
- Have enough financial and material support for what they need'.

The Plan goes on to set out some of the many actions that the Welsh Government will take, with others, to put that belief into practise and make those rights a reality.

We owe care experienced children and young people a particular duty of care to ensure that their rights are fully realised. This is a major area of concern for us.

We knew at the start of radical reform process that many children and young people have positive experiences in the care system and do well in life. They thrive and grow, cared for and supported, and go on to achieve their full potential. We had seen positive changes. For example, far more care experienced young

people were going to university than ever before. We were, and are, proud of young people's achievements and resilience, and we are grateful to all those who care for and support them.

But we also knew then that far too many care experienced children and young people do not have their rights realised. Our discussions with care experienced young people through the Summit process has confirmed this. Far too many care experienced young people experience homelessness. The percentage of care experienced young people leave school with five good GCSE or more is still too low. Care experienced children and young people are stigmatised, and often do not receive the support they need to overcome the trauma that they have experienced.

To us, the Government of Wales, this was, and is, unacceptable. In our Programme of Government – the document where we set out our promises to the people of Wales – we made number of promises to care experienced children and young people and their families that we have begun to keep in this Senedd term. For example, we introduced a Basic Income Payment for care leavers to give them a better start into their independent lives and we have passed a law to stop private companies making profit out of the care children need.

We also made a bigger promise, and have acted on it. In our Programme of Government we promised to 'explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers.'

With the care experienced Young Ambassadors through the Summit process we have been exploring what radical reform of services should mean for care experienced children and young people.

Young Ambassadors

At the start we, the Young Ambassadors, worked with other care experienced children and young people to explore what radical reform means. We started with the dictionary. Radical has two meanings; through, complete, total, entire: and revolutionary, progressive, reforming. Reform means improve, make better, mend. These are great words.

We were glad that Welsh Government understood the need for radical reform. Some of us had been involved in consultations before, and we hadn't always felt that we were listened to and our concerns were acted on. But we are proud of the work we have been doing with this Welsh Government, and we know we have been listened to from the start. We have been working with other care experienced children and young people to understand their experiences of current services and what needs to change.

We came to the first Summit with our ideas about what radically reformed services could look like and deliver for care experienced children and young people and their families. We shared these ideas, and helped create a vision of what radically reformed services will look like and deliver, a Vision that we and Welsh Government agreed. Since then, we have met with more care experienced children and young people and have learnt more about what needs to change. So we have agreed a new Vision with Welsh Ministers. This is set out below.



The Vision

Welsh Government

We listened to what the Young Ambassadors have told us about their experiences and the experiences of other care experienced children and young people. We heard their ideas about what radically reformed services should look like and should deliver for care experienced children and young people, and have been acting to deliver on the first Vision. We learnt more from Young Ambassadors at the Summit in May 2025 and together we have developed this new Vision, which builds on the first one. We fully support it.

Young Ambassadors

Welsh Ministers listened to our experiences and our ideas for a Vision of what radically reformed services could look like and deliver. We agreed the first Vision at the first Summit. We have agreed the new Vision with Ministers and fully support it.



Welsh Government

We have listened to what the Young Ambassadors have told us about their experiences and the experiences of other care experienced children and young people. We have heard their ideas about what radically reformed services should look like and should deliver for care experienced children and young people. Together we have developed this Vision, which we support.

Young Ambassadors

Welsh Ministers have listened to our experiences and our ideas for a Vision of what radically reformed services could look like and deliver. We support the Vision set out below:

1. All children and young people who are affected by the care system will be engaged with and listened to at every stage. People listening to them will understand that it can sometimes be hard to express your views or be confident to tell the whole truth. They will support children and young people, including little ones, to speak out.
2. Children and young people will be informed about their rights and entitlements. Services supporting young people will aim to use clear and respectful language to discuss rights and support for children and young people. Information about what support is available in different areas of Wales will be presented to young people in a similar way to make it easier to understand.
3. When children and young people's wishes about where and with whom they live can't be agreed to because they need to live somewhere else so that they can thrive, what is happening and why will be properly explained to them.
4. No child or young person will be taken into care unless everything possible has been done to help their family look after them well, unless there is an emergency.
5. Social services will make sure accurate information is available to children and young people about what is happening and where they are going to live when they are taken into care, and whenever they have to move home. Everything possible will be done to minimise the shock and trauma young people can feel during any moves they make into care or from one home to another.
6. Families whose children might be taken into care will all have an independent advocate to help and support them and make sure their voices are heard. Children and young people in the family will have their own independent advocates too (see below), to make sure their voices are heard.
7. When a child or young person is taken into care, services will work with the family and the child or young person to do everything possible to help the family be able to come back together, if it is possible to help the family support the child or young person to thrive.

8. Children and young people will be listened to if they say they don't want to go home, and their wishes and feelings will be considered. When children and young people do go home professionals will check in regularly to make sure everything is going well and help if needed.
9. When children and young people are taken into care, they will be supported to stay in touch with their birth family if this is possible. Their views about contact and communication with their birth family will be listened to and acted on if possible. No child or young person will be pressured into contact that they do not want.
10. Social Services will make sure young people have access to life story books or other ways they can understand more of their personal history.
11. Young people who are adopted will be supported to know as much as possible about their past and heritage. This will include supporting contact with birth family members where possible, and having access to their medical history.
12. When children and young people are taken into care professionals will continue to work with the family. This is important because these families may have more children, and because when care experienced young people are old enough, they often want to be in touch with, and sometimes live with, their birth families.
13. When care experienced people become parents they will be helped and supported to look after their babies and children. Babies and children will never be subject to child protection action just because their mother or father is care experienced.
14. When children and young people are taken into care, they will all have a fully independent advocate to help them get their voices heard when decisions are being made about them and their care. Their advocate will help them to understand decision being made before, during and after the process happens. They will be able to stay in touch with their advocate if they wish, so they do not have to keep explaining things over and over.
15. When children and young people are taken into care, they will be able to stay close to their family and friends in their own communities and their own schools. They will only be sent far away if they are in danger or at risk.
16. Social services will do everything possible to avoid changes to support to a young person during exams or other critical times in education and young people will not have to change their school or college unnecessarily when they move home if they want to stay where they are.
17. When children and young people are taken into care, and throughout their care journey, their right to their language and culture will always be respected. Young people will have opportunities to socialise with others in Welsh. No child or young person will ever lose their Welsh Language because they have been taken into care.
18. Everyone working to support care experienced children and young people will understand that being taken into care throws children and young people into trauma/ crises. We as a nation need to understand how trauma affects us as individuals and as a community.
19. There will be more foster carers, so children and young people who are taken into care can find the right people to take care of them straight away. Care-experienced children and young people will be informed about the choices available to them about where they live and who they live with. They will not have to move time and time again, from home to home.
20. Carers will show love and affection for the young people they care for.
21. When foster carers are recruited care will be taken to ensure that they have the right values and behaviours to support children and young people to grow and thrive. They will be supported to help reduce the stigma faced by care experienced young people. Young people will be supported in ways that are understanding and respectful and don't make them seem 'different' to others.

22. Kinship carers will be offered support to help them be good carers for young people so that young people feel comfortable and safe. Carers will be provided with up-to-date information about issues for young people and opportunities available for further support.
23. Foster carers will be trained to understand trauma and how it effects children and young people. They will get regular training and support.
24. Foster carers will be trained to support all children and young people. They will understand the different needs of children and young people with protected characteristics and know how to support them. Young people with disabilities will have all the support they need from carers and the local authority.
25. Foster carers will all be paid fairly. Kinship carers will not be paid less, and carers will not be paid more if the child or young person they are looking after is 'difficult.' Care experienced children and young people will not be labelled like that.
26. There will be enough staff with the right values, skills, and experience to support care experienced children and young people. They will be provided with all the training and support they need and will show empathy and understanding at all times, including through trauma-informed practice. Services for young people will encourage frontline staff to support the same young people over a long time where possible to help young people build trusting relationships. Care experienced children and young people will be able to access support when they need it, not just between 9am and 4pm on weekdays.
27. If foster care is not right for a care experienced child or young person there will be a range of options available to them so they can live a life that suits their needs.
28. Children and young people living in residential settings will have the same rights as children living in foster care and have equal opportunities to socialise and be part of the community. The rules in residential homes for children will be fair, and staff will be calm and reasonable when upholding them. Where young people are able to be responsible they should have a level of independence which reflects that.
29. Care experienced young asylum seekers will be supported in ways that work for them and that respect their rights. They will be told what support is available and how to access it. They will have more access to interpreters who they are comfortable with and who understand their language and dialect to help them express their needs and do practical things like making appointments with the health service. Online translation doesn't always work. There will be flexibility in how interpreters are provided so that young people get the right interpretation support at the right time, including in emergencies.
30. Care experienced young asylum seekers will have the same right to a full education as every other child and young person. They will be supported to learn English, and if they wish where appropriate Welsh, quickly, and to learn and socialise with other young people of a similar age. They will get the practical support they need to access learning opportunities. When they are over compulsory school age, they will be able to decide whether face to face or online learning works best for them.
31. Care experienced young asylum seekers, post 16, will be supported to learn practical and vocational skills in the community they are living in. They will have short-term and long-term plans for education to support them in their personal aspirations. They will not be made to wait for months to join school or college, and they will be supported to learn independently and in the community.

32. They will be able to learn life skills to help them understand the community they are living in, and if, they are old enough, will be able to undertake work experience placements to help them find work when they are able to. Care experienced young asylum seekers will have the same support wherever in Wales they are looked after. They will receive the same financial support as other care experienced children and young people. Financial support will ensure that young people have the essential resources they need to live as part of their community, including clothing, transport, and gifts for special occasions like Christmas and Eid.
33. Care experienced young asylum seekers will have the same support as that which is provided to other care experienced children and young people. They will be treated with care, dignity and respect. Care experienced young asylum seekers will be supported to develop lasting relationships with adults they can trust. They will be supported to engage in cultural activities which are important to them and to pursue their hobbies and interests. They will be supported to get to know their local area, build social networks and engage in local activities.
34. Professionals working with care experienced children and young people will communicate well with each other. For example, social workers will make sure schools know about changes for a child or young person. Children and young people will never have to explain these things themselves, and they won't have to keep telling their stories over and over again. Young people will be able to get prompt responses when they need to ask permission for decisions they want to make.
35. When Local Authorities hold formal meetings with young people to plan for their care, they will always listen to and respect young people's views about who attends the meeting, and where and when it is held. Children and young people will never be made to feel that their views are being excluded from the process.
36. Organisations that plan and provide care will not make lots of money and give that money to the people who own the organisations. All the money that is spent to provide care for children and young people will be used to provide that care and to make that care better. No child or young person will be left without a home that is right for them if their care home closes or changes because of this, and all the money saved by not paying profits will stay in the system to care for children and young people.
37. If children and young people raise concerns about how they are being cared for they will be listened to and believed. There will be a proper investigation of their concerns. Children and young people will never be left in placements when they have said they feel unhappy or uncared for.
38. Care experienced children and young people will be supported to take part in activities in their communities, including youth work opportunities. Youth workers will be trained to understand the challenges that care experienced young people may face and will know how to support them.
39. Local authorities will make sure care experienced children and young people are supported and encouraged to take part in learning opportunities beyond the classroom, making sure that they are not limited or put off by the processes that are sometimes time consuming and over protective.
40. Schools and colleges, and everyone who works in them, will really understand care experienced children and young people. They will know that they might need extra support sometimes to learn and be happy. Schools and colleges will make sure they get that support to the full extent of their entitlement. They will make sure young people get support when they need it so they do not spend a long time without it, especially at critical stages in their education like exams.

41. Schools and colleges will understand that care experienced children and young people often experience discrimination because of stigma, and they will work hard to bring that stigma to an end. Schools and colleges will help to protect care experienced young people's privacy. They will help young people to have good relationships with their peers and will make sure they are not treated unfairly or given negative labels.
42. Children and young people will be supported to find the right learning environment for them. They will have help with the cost and practicalities of accessing education, including transport.
43. Care experienced children and young people will do as well at school and college as other children and young people, getting good qualifications and access to opportunities which reflect their personal aspirations. They will not have their educational choices limited or discouraged because they are care experienced. They will be supported and encouraged to explore a range of learning and career opportunities.
44. Care experienced young people will be just as likely to go to university as any other young person.
45. Care experienced young people will be just as likely to get an apprenticeship and a good job as any other young person. The government will help to upskill and hire care experienced young people for roles in the public sector.
46. All care experienced young people will be supported by their corporate parents until they are 25. There will be support available to those young people who want it after that age. Corporate parents will make sure young people have the same kind of financial and practical support as their peers to enable their personal development and social networks. They will make sure young people know about the financial support they can access and how the money supporting them is being spent. Young people will receive the full amount they are entitled to.
47. All care experienced young people will be able to stay with their foster carers until they are 25 if they choose, and there will be enough money for the foster carers to carry on supporting them. Young people who are living in residential care when they reach 18 will be supported to continue to live in the community near the home if they want to and be able to stay in touch with staff and turn to them for support. Changes in support will be gradual and planned, so that a young person does not face disruption just because they are turning 18.
48. Young people leaving care will begin to learn to live independently long before they have to do so. They will be supported to plan for the future they want, and that support will be there for them for as long as they need it. They will be supported to manage their money well. They will not be made to live independently until they are ready.
49. No care experienced young person will ever be homeless when they leave care. They will be supported to find not just anywhere to live but a comfortable home where they can learn to be independent and happy. They will be supported to keep that home. They will be supported to find a home where they can live for a long time and can feel dignity, privacy and security. They will never be evicted if they have nowhere to go. They will be supported until they can manage.
50. Young people in care and young people leaving care will be no more likely than any other young person to get in trouble with the law. If they do end up in trouble with the law, they will be treated exactly the same as any other young person. If they end up in prison, they will continue to be supported so that when they leave, they can find a home and have a chance to start again.

51. Care experienced children and young people will be able to get help to support their mental health whenever they need it, as soon as they need it, in a way that is respectful and reflects their needs and protected characteristics. Support for mental health and wellbeing will be offered to young people without them having to ask for it, and will be available straight away when issues first arise to stop them from getting worse.
52. Children and young people with care experience will be supported and encouraged to develop positive relationships with peers and support networks in the community. Young people will be offered extra help with developing positive habits and attitudes – for example staying active or maintaining a positive outlook and positive relationships – so that they are better able to develop social networks which have a positive influence in their life.
53. They will never lose support when they become 18 and move to adult services. Professionals will make sure that children and young people, and their carers know what support is available and how to get it. Changes in the support available for a child or young person will be gradual and planned.
54. How well care experienced children and young people are cared for and supported will never depend on where they live.
55. People who decide things about care experienced children and young people's lives will know them and understand them. They will meet them often and they will listen to them and act on what they say. Children and young people with care experience everywhere in Wales will be supported to come together with others so they have a more powerful voice.
56. People who decide things about care experienced children and young people will be honest and transparent, they will make sure young people's rights are properly acted on. They will make sure there is accountability – where young people are shown that things are really improving. Promises made to young people about the support they will receive will be kept, and whenever promises cannot be kept then things will be put right as soon as possible.

Welsh Government and Young Ambassadors

The Vision will continue to develop. It is a living, growing Vision. It will grow as we work with and listen to more care experienced children and young people and those who work with them and support them. We will learn more. There will be more things that we can make better, and more ideas as to how to do that.

The principle behind everything that we have set out and will set out in the Vision as it grows, is that care experienced children and young people should have the same chances as every other child or young person to have their rights (as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and therefore in the Welsh Government's Children and Young People's Action Plan) realised.

Signed on behalf of the Welsh Government:

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First Minister

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Minister for Children and Social Care

Signed on behalf of the care experienced Young Ambassadors:

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Young Ambassador

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Young Ambassador

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Young Ambassador

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Young Ambassador