

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Gwasanaethau i blant sydd wedi bod mewn gofal: archwilio diwygio radical | Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform

Ymateb gan Gweithredu dros Blant Cymru | Evidence from Action for Children Fostering Wales

Before care: Safely reducing the number of children in the care system

Please outline a maximum of three top priorities for radical reform of services for safely reducing the number of children in the care system.

Priority 1

Trauma and its impacts are intergenerational. Consequently, how we address it and reduce the number of looked after children safely, would require a whole family approach e.g., from great grandparents, grandparents, children, grandchildren etc. to comprehend the impact of trauma and how it presents. Supporting the generations to recognise that it's their behaviours have an impact on how children grow and develop is paramount.

Priority 2

Systems involved with children looked after e.g., Family Court Judges, Heads of Service, Team Managers, Local Authority safeguarding teams, fostering teams, intensive family support teams, education, health, contact/family time workers etc., also need a better understanding of trauma, and how it impacts on development, including brain development and attachment in children, who then become adults/parents. It's lifelong, not short term nor is there a short term solution.

Priority 3

As a former special guardianship social work assessor there needs to be better understanding of trauma, more support, both emotional and financial for kinship carers, their income is irrelevant. Also, opportunities for foster carers/parents to be able to 'foster to adopt' so that children can be given the opportunity to make life long attachments with their main caregivers. Helping children to make positive safe attachments with adults.

In care: Quality services and support for children in care

Please outline a maximum of three top priorities for radical reform of services for children in care.

Priority 1

Children looked after need all professionals who are caring for them to recognise the impact trauma and what impact it has had upon them. Children looked after are not removed from their parents care for nothing, the evidence is often collated over several years. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) are significant and mind alerting (Dr Bruce Perry), and traumatic experiences upon children's development both pre and post birth requires an attuned understanding. Professionals within services who truly understand it's

impact upon them developmentally is required. Children need allocated social workers who have the time to go through their history and recognise the impact that it has on them daily.

Priority 2

Consistent social workers continues to be a must, one that is willing to work with other professionals that work with the child and the carer to achieve the best possible outcomes. Children looked after are being re-exposed to their trauma by having family time with their parents/family members who have subjected them to the trauma e.g., domestic abuse, substance misuse, neglect and this continues to impact upon the child. Work needs to be undertaken with the parents to recognise the harm they have caused prior to having contact with the child. Children looked after also have the right to heal from the trauma they have been subjected to.

Priority 3

The right to be happy, and not feel guilty or shame. Children looked after have the right to be happy and not feel guilty about not attending family time if they wish not to see family who are a consistent source of pain and trauma. Longer term support, and no urgency on the child to leave the care of their foster parent, who often become their life long attachment figure.

After care: On-going support when young people leave care

Please outline a maximum of three top priorities for radical reform of the on-going support provided when young people leave care.

Priority 1

Leaving care should be the last option, living independently is hard, children looked after also experience being alone and therefore encouraging this should be the last option.

Priority 2

Seeking a care order is hard, enabling/encouraging children to return to their source of trauma is damaging. Therefore, having a narrative for any looked after child is imperative in relation to why they become looked after, it doesn't need to be life journey work!!

Priority 3

Ensuring that children looked after who leave care prior to their eighteenth birthday but continue to have contact with their former foster carer then their attendance at on-going CLAR/Pathway Plan meetings should be encouraged.

Anything else

Trauma and its impacts need to be recognised, we all experience trauma, and deal with it in ways that we learnt to as children - how we connect with others and deal with it is how we start to recover. We need to start helping families and children recover from the trauma they've experienced. (sources Dr Bruce Perry and Dr Gabor Mate).
