

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 Steve Phillips, person sydd â phrofiad o ofal ac a fu'n aelod o baneli maethu fel Cadeirydd annibynnol | Evidence from Steve Phillips, Formerly care experienced and sit on fostering panels as Independent fostering panel chair

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

Early intervention and support for parents who are struggling. This could be increased social services funding, community based hubs or a specialist unit throughout Wales to offer support education and opportunities

Priority 2

Increased police resources in areas where issues like drugs are affecting societies to minimise the affect on children and parenting.

Priority 3

Decreasing levels of poverty in communities by means of a minimum allowance for households struggling similar to the allowance given to care leavers

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

Stability. Stability in Social Services supervision, I see a large turnover of children's social workers in my role on fostering panels sometimes with a child having several different social workers in a year. That means there is no continuity for a child in care and no continuity for foster parents with Local Authority social workers moving role so often. Sometimes a child is left without a supervising social worker at all which is unacceptable.

Priority 2

More children's social work staff so that social workers case loads are smaller, there is less pressure on staff and children get a much better and consistent service

Priority 3

Contract out all mainstream fostering to Independent fostering Agencies, some of who provide exceptional therapeutic care to the most damaged children in Wales and are more able to provide therapy and support for children. Keep kinship care within local authorities and contract out therapeutic support where applicable.

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

The when Im ready scheme and allowance scheme in Wales are both excellent developments but care leavers need guidance and support in how best to use the allowance and use it to support their futures.

Priority 2

Formal training and practical help for all care leavers on finance - what bills they will have to pay when living independently, what work looks like, tax national insurance pensions etc, future proofing themselves, learning about debt, interest rates, mortgages etc

Priority 3

For children leaving care pay a deposit on their first home to allow them to get on the housing ladder. They can then use the leaving care allowance to help pay a mortgage and bills helping them build a successful life and help them have stable lives meaning their children will not enter the care system

Anything else

I have been a member of fostering panels for 20 years and as a former care leaver who has made a success of his life am passionate about giving cared for children the same opportunities I had. I had stability in that I had the same social worker for 8 years who knew me and my issues and was able to advocate for me. The foster parents I had were very good and I had a positive experience of the care system - that should be the same for every cared for child. As corporate parents we should strive to go beyond "Good enough" care and break the cycle of children and their children often being in care.