

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 **Serenity Welfare** | Evidence from Serenity Welfare

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

Priority 2

Priority 3

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

Ban the use of handcuffs on children and young people during secure transportation, except in instances of criminal suspicion or accusation. Handcuffs and other methods of restraint are extremely damaging to children – both physically and mentally – and are used despite the fact that the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child considers that children should never be restrained to secure compliance. Such damaging practices should be banned, with secure transportation providers instead looking to de-escalation techniques for behavioural management, that put the welfare of the child first. The Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework (RRPF) makes clear that it is inappropriate to use handcuffs of any kind during journeys outside of the criminal justice system. We welcome this addition to the RRPF, however, to ensure that the ban on handcuffs is properly adhered to, this guidance must be made mandatory. The ban must also be extended to other nations of the UK, as many journeys carried out by transportation providers are cross-border. We recommend that the Welsh Government works with its counterparts in the devolved nations to achieve this.

Priority 2

Mandate that all private secure transportation providers be legally obliged to report any instances of restraint of innocent children to the commissioning local authority, who would keep a record of this data. Only by doing so will the safety and wellbeing of children under the care of these providers be protected, by ensuring that unnecessary restraint – which we know occurs via handcuffing, chemical

restraint, and other means – is avoided entirely. Legally obliging the collection of data rather than having it as an ‘expectation’ could be achieved by strengthening the RRPf as outlined below.

Priority 3

Strengthen the Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework (RRPF) to make it mandatory. The RRPf, which now includes a section explicitly on restraint during secure transport, is a vital document to protect the safety and wellbeing of children in care. It enables the inspection of secure transportation providers by Care Inspectorate Wales, ensures that its contents is taken into account during procurement of such providers by local authorities, and, as above, provides a pathway to monitoring and recording instances of unnecessary restraint. However, unless the RRPf is made mandatory, there is a risk that its implementation will not be properly scrutinised, and that the avoidance of unnecessary restraint will not be embedded into procurement processes. It is therefore essential that the RRPf is strengthened to be made mandatory.

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

Priority 2

Priority 3

Anything else