

Transformation of Children's Services Programme – Communication Update

September 2023



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

Introduction

I am pleased to introduce you to our first Transformation of Children's Services communications update. There is a lot of co-productive work underway to drive forward change within Wales and we wanted to share this with you.

The Welsh Government's vision for children's services in Wales is clear - we want more children 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.

Our Programme for Government contains 8 commitments which provide the framework to do this. The delivery of these commitments will effect change across the whole system in Wales and aligns to the aims and objectives in our [Children and Young People's Plan](#). Both these commitments and the Plan will be delivered over this whole Senedd term.

Programme for Government commitments for Children's Services:

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.

We know that the changes needed to deliver our vision will take time and cannot be achieved overnight, but we do know that things can change quickly when everyone works together. We can for example learn from and build on good examples of services already being provided for care experienced children and young people in Wales. We have therefore established our Transformation Programme which is built on three key elements - radical reform, future provision of services and the whole system working together – running through all of this is the voice of care-experienced children and young people.

This bulletin introduces our roadmap for the Transformation Programme and the governance structure we have set up to support its delivery. The bulletin also provides an update on the work we have been doing and what is happening next.

Voice of a Care-Experienced Young Person

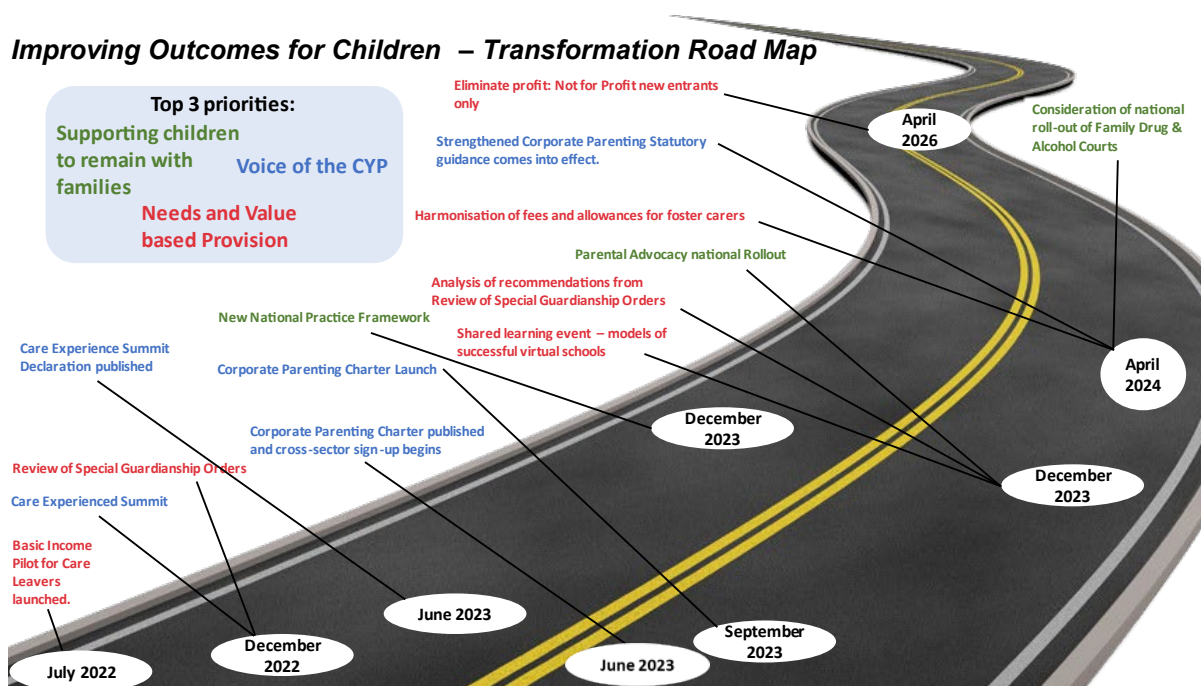
“We were pleased to talk to the last meeting of the Transformation Delivery Group about the Summit meeting between Ministers and care experienced Young Ambassadors, and the [declaration](#) we agreed.

The Vision in the Declaration is really ambitious, and we know that not everything can change overnight. But when the Ministers and Young Ambassadors meet again next year we expect to understand clearly how the Vision is being delivered. That's why the work of the Transformation Delivery Group is so important, and why we think it's important for us to be part of it.”

*Hope Hover and Rhian Thomas
Voices From Care Cymru Ambassadors*

Our Transformation Programme Roadmap

To support and deliver our Transformation Programme of work we have a programme budget of circa £70m from 2022/2025 to drive our plans outlined in the roadmap below:



Examples of the work which has been taken forward in 2022/2023 include the development of a National Practice Framework, (read on for further information on the Framework), investment of £1.6m this Senedd term to upscale parental advocacy services across Wales and work to strengthen public bodies in their role as corporate parents through publication of the Corporate Parenting Charter.

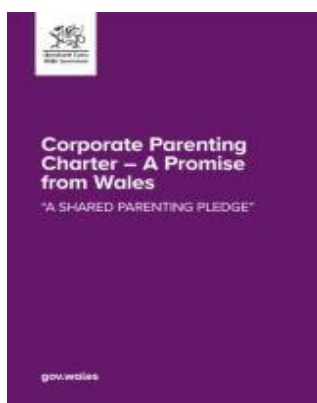
To manage delivery of the Transformation Programme, a Ministerial Oversight Board has been established and met for the first time in May this year. The Board is jointly chaired by the First Minister and Deputy Minister for Social Services. A Transformation Delivery Group has also been established and includes representatives from across sectors with an interest in children’s services including care experienced young people themselves. This Group has met three times this year and is chaired by Jonathan Griffiths, Transformation lead for children and adult social services.

Progress so far, achievements and next steps

The following gives a more detailed update on some of the areas within the roadmap highlighting some of the achievements and the plans for next steps:



On 3 December 2022, the Inaugural Care Leavers Summit took place between Welsh Ministers including the First Minister and the Deputy Minister for Social Services and 50 care-experienced young people or ambassadors. The outcome of the summit is a [declaration](#) which was signed by the First Minister on behalf of Welsh Government and by 4 of the young ambassadors on 10 May this year.



On 29 June 2023, we published online the Corporate Parenting [Charter](#). The Charter developed by the Corporate Parenting Implementation Group outlines a set of principles for public and private sector bodies to follow when providing services to care-experienced children and young people, so they get the same life chances as everyone else.

A wider public launch of the Charter will take place this month.

National Practice Framework

Work is underway to develop the National Practice Framework. The Framework will be the first set of national standards for children’s services in Wales, sitting alongside other all-Wales procedures like the All-Wales safeguarding procedures. The standards will be multi-agency, because we recognise children who need help and protection often need the support of a number of professionals who work together as a team. We anticipate delivering up to 5 new standards of practice by the end of 2023 with further standards being co-produced by the end of 2024.

Eliminate Private Profit from the care of looked after children.

We have established 4 new workstreams under the Eliminate Programme Board to utilise a wide range of skills and experience to really drive progress in ensuring sufficiency of placements and building resilience in the sector including:

- Expanding and Developing New Local Authority/ Regional Provision
- Expanding and developing new Not-for-Profit Provision

- Transitioning Independent/Private Sector
- Best Interests Transition Group

Two subgroups have also been set up under work stream 1 focussing on placement stability and exploring solutions to reduce the need for Operating without Registration arrangements, alongside issues associated with the recruitment and retention of the children’s residential workforce.

In addition, two subgroups have been set up under workstream 3 to consider organisational value/assets and business structures/models.

We have invested an additional £68m into the sector over three years to support and drive delivery of our vision to eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after. This funding will be focused on building local authority residential and foster care provision, on moving children out of residential care back into a family setting, on providing locally based and designed services, including specialist provision for children with more complex needs and above all improving outcomes for children.

The consultation associated with proposals for primary legislation to support ‘eliminating profit from the care of children looked after’ was launched on 17 August and ended on the 7 November. The [summary of responses](#) was published on 22nd June.

On 27 June this year the First Minister announced there will be a Social Care Bill introduced in the latter half of the Sept 23 to July 24 Senedd year to support our commitment to eliminate profit.



We have continued to invest in our national fostering scheme, Foster Wales, to improve the ability of local authority fostering services to recruit and retain foster carers. This will help them to realise their collective ambition of placing more fostered children in local authority placements, within their home area, keeping children close to their networks and communities wherever possible and appropriate.

Kinship (inclusive of Special Guardianship Orders)

We are committed to ensuring that kinship foster carers receive the same support as mainstream foster carers and through the Foster Wales National Commitment we are working towards an agreed package of training, support, and rewards being consistently available to all kinship foster carers through all 22 local authority fostering agencies in Wales.

We want Kinship Foster Carers to receive financial support on a par with mainstream foster carers. Our current work on fees and allowances is focussed on ensuring consistency of financial support across Wales to all approved foster carers.

We have also set up a Special Guardianship Expert Group which has representation from the statutory and third sector alongside service users. It will be looking at developing an improved and consistent needs-based approach to supporting Special Guardianship families across Wales.

Adoption

The Wales 'Adoption Support Commitment' outlines the support that all adoptive families in Wales can expect to be able to access at each stage of their adoption journey. The Commitment is the first document of its kind in the UK and aims to ensure adoptive families in Wales feel confident that information and support is available when needed, from professionals with specialist knowledge of adoption and children's care needs.

As part of a modern adoption service for Wales, alongside the National Adoption Service we are focussing on further improving adopted children's contact with their birth families where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

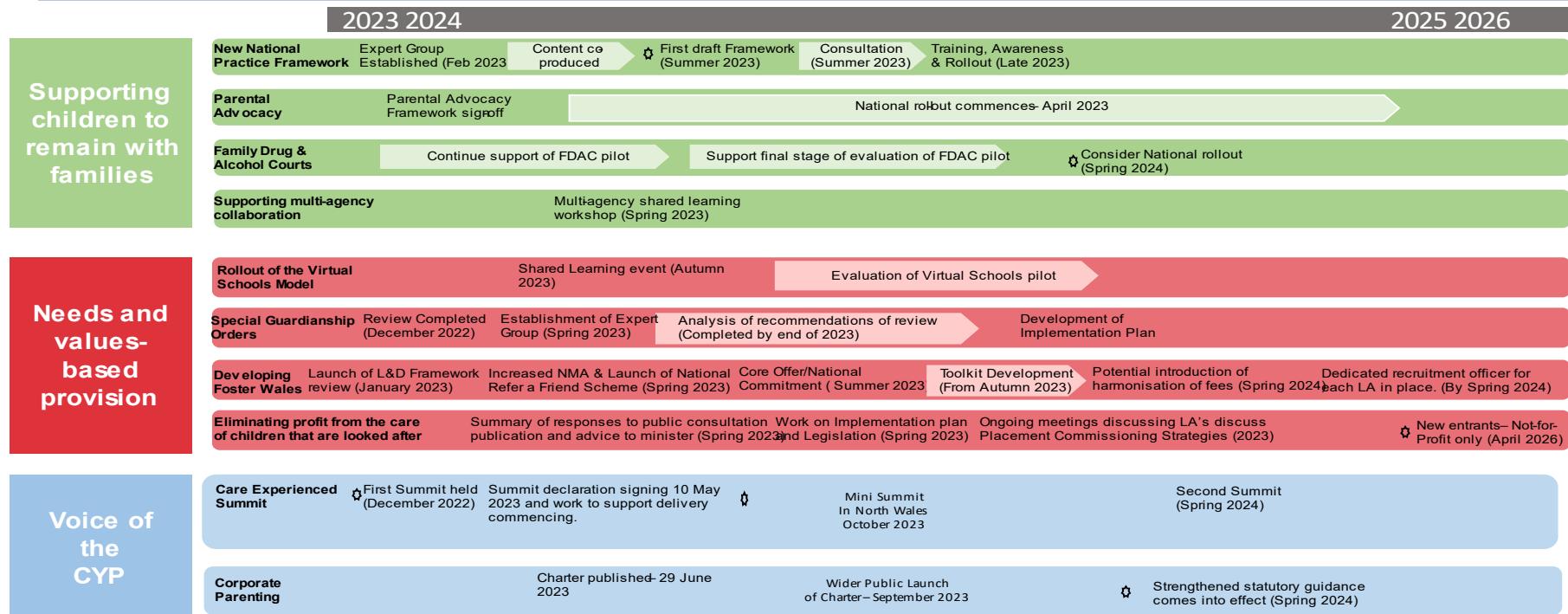
The Deputy Minister for Social Services issued a formal apology on behalf of the Welsh Government for the experiences and lifelong impact of all those affected by historical adoption practices in Wales. We continue to work with the National Adoption Service to consider the support that can be put in place to support those affected by such practices.

Whilst adopters are provided with support throughout the adoption process, subsequent support is also required from employers to help adopters and those waiting for a child to join their family. The National Adoption Service for Wales has launched a new employer toolkit to help businesses and organisations enhance their support for employees who are adopters or waiting to adopt.

Some of the highlights for the next six months

We are continuing to build on the work we have already begun on the Transformation Programme as outlined above.

Milestones in our Transformation Programme



The voice of the child will continue to be central to everything that we do and building on the **Inaugural Care Leavers Summit** we will be working with Voices from Care to hold a North Wales region care leavers summit in October.

Of particular focus for the remaining of this year will be the publication and communication of the Corporate Parenting Charter which is key in the delivery of the Care Leavers Summit Declaration.

We will continue to work with the Corporate Parenting Implementation Group to consider future steps for Corporate Parenting including the development of guidance to support the implementation and a dedicated chapter on Corporate Parenting to support local authorities in their role as corporate parents within the relevant Part 6 Code of Practice for looked after and accommodated children. A consultation of the draft chapter and guidance will take place this winter.

On the National Practice Framework work will be undertaken to widen the consultation process, using the draft national standards as a basis for becoming confident that the final version of the Practice Framework is going to make a difference to children's lives over time. . We will work with practitioners across Wales to ensure the practice framework is being applied and meets the needs of children.

We continue to invest in **Foster Wales** and direct our investment to ensuring we can recruit foster families that meet the evolving and varied needs of the children that need care and support. We will continue to implement a consistent core offer of support to foster families across Wales to ensure our foster families can access needs-based support whenever they need it and wherever they are located in Wales.

The **Foster Wales National Commitment** has been launched which offers an agreed package of training, support, and rewards consistently available to all local authority foster carers in Wales. Work continues with local authorities in Wales to support the implementation of the various components outlined within the commitment. Work is progressing with the financial modelling relating to the National Minimum Allowance and a new set of harmonised payment arrangements.

For further information please contact:
plantsynderbyngofal@llyw.cymru/
lookedafterchildren@gov.wales

Factsheet: Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant Scheme

Did you know about some the projects we fund through our Sustainable Third Sector Grant Scheme:



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| <p>Ar Trac – Welsh Women’s Aid</p> <p>The Ar Trac project supports children and young people who have experienced or witnesses domestic abuse, and who are exhibiting difficulties with their family and peer relationships. By addressing these difficulties and building upon strengths within childhood, Ar Trac aims to minimise the impact of the adverse childhood experiences associated with domestic abuse and improve physical and mental well-being later in life.</p> | <p>Parent Advocacy Programme - National Youth Advocacy Service</p> <p>The project aims to support Welsh Government’s plans for providing family intervention support with the aim of reducing numbers of children entering the care system in Wales. The project’s key aim is preventative intervention whilst ensuring the rights of the child are fully upheld.</p> |
| <p>Project Unity - National Youth Advocacy Service</p> <p>Project Unity offers support to care experienced pregnant young women and young mothers up to the age of 25 across Wales. It provides one to one emotional and practical support with the aim of keeping families together, wherever possible.</p> <p>This project provides intensive wraparound support for care-experienced mothers and helps builds peer support</p> | <p>Skills PLUS (Skills+) - Action for Children</p> <p>Skills+ is a service for Care-Experienced Young People (CEYP) aged 14-24. The project is delivering bespoke Pathways that support CEYP’s transition to adulthood, through a range of interlinked interventions designed specifically to reduce their vulnerabilities and equip them with the resilience, skills/tools to help them to cope positively with the challenges of independent living.</p> |

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| <p>networks for them. The aim of the project is to help break the cycle of the children of these care-experienced mothers being taken into care themselves and help prevent them becoming subject to child protection processes.</p> | |
| <p>Supporting BAME Children and Young People in Wales – EYST</p> <p>The services is a referral-based service for BME Children and Young People aged 0-25 with ‘additional’ or ‘multiple’ support needs. The service aims to improve the wellbeing outcomes of BME Children and Young People with social care needs, through a race-, faith- and culture-sensitive, person-centred and rights-based support service, building on and connecting to EYST’s work with BME Children and Young People in Swansea.</p> | <p>Supporting Young People in NPT and Swansea - Plattform</p> <p>Plattform’s Young People’s Project provides a safe space for young people aged 13-16 years to pause, breathe and connect. Through the provision of a wellbeing programme, peer support and one-to-one support, young people will be given the opportunity to explore what mental health and wellbeing means to them. Young people will have the opportunity to meet others facing similar challenges, share stories of recovery and everyday strategies for wellbeing. The project provides the opportunity for young people to train to become peer mentors and will give young people a platform to shape the direction of the project.</p> |
| <p>The Fostering Network Wales</p> <p>The Fostering Network aims to deliver a programme of work which will empower the fostering community to improve well-being outcomes for looked after children and young people within the national well-being framework. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting ‘Fosterline Wales’ a high-quality information and advice service, offering phone support accessible digital resources toolkits and webinars; • Offering Professional Development aimed at the fostering workforce through events and webinars assessable throughout Wales; • Proving independent advice and mediation to all foster carers and services staff to help resolve conflict, complaints or allegations. • Supporting good practice to reduce and prevent incidents that can risk placement breakdown and de-registration. | |

Factsheet: Transformation Programme for Children's Services Key Facts

A total of £3.5m of Regional Accommodation funding was used by 15 projects across all regions in Wales and has resulted in:

- Creation of 26 new beds of regional provision for children with complex needs
- Support for 62 children and young people with complex needs.

In 2022/23, Regional Partnership Boards assigned approximately £50m of Welsh Government funding through the Regional Integration Fund to invest in 86 projects across Wales.

We are investing £1.6 million of funding during this Senedd term through the Care Experienced Children Change Fund, to scale up existing parental advocacy services across Wales.

We have invested an additional £68m over three years to support local authorities and drive delivery of our vision to eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after.

There were over 40 Care-experienced children who took part in the Inaugural Care Leavers Summit which took place on 3 December 2022. This was the first event of its kind in Wales.

Since 2017, we have provided £1m annually for the St David's Day fund which provides money directly to young people who have experienced care to help them access opportunities that will support progression to independence. The

The Welsh Government has joined the Civil Service Care Leavers Internship Scheme for 2023 and is offering three roles in the latest recruitment round.