

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

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

Gwaith dilynol ar Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i Wasanaethau Mabwysiadu yng Nghymru | Follow-up to Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Adoption Services in Wales

AS 05

Ymateb gan : Rhiant sy'n Mabwysiadu

Response from : Adoptive Parent

## Overview Question

What are your views in the Welsh Government's progress in respect of the 16 recommendations and the 25 'detailed actions' set out on pages 5-11 of the [Committee's report](#).

We are pleased that since the original report the National Adoption Service has been set up; that the number of adoptions in Wales is bucking the trend and increasing, that for some children there are less delays, that a database of all adoptive families in Wales is being established, that there is more support available to adopters on the first steps of their journeys and that a child to parent violence project has been established. However we also believe that unless proper recognition is given to the need for intensive, multi-agency work for some adopted children, often over several years, there will be more and more fostered and adopted young people ending up homeless on the streets, or worse.

The request for views coincided with some correspondence we have entered with our local Social Services Directorate. The correspondence was in relation to our adopted son who will be 21 this year.

He came to live with us at 14 months old. He has had exceptionally challenging behaviour throughout his childhood and was eventually diagnosed with attachment disorder, ADHD and anxiety. Despite this we managed to keep him at home until age 17 and he achieved 10 GCSEs A-C. Sadly he is now on the streets and homeless, recently took an overdose and has spent time in prison due to the level of aggression and violence he displays towards us. We are prepared to share our story to highlight the damaging lack of joined up thinking, multi-agency working or therapy in relation to his needs.

Our letter to our local social services directorate highlighted not just our son's situation but the situation we are hearing so many looked after, former looked after and adopted young people are facing in Wales. We are hearing stories of families still struggling for support, in exactly the same way we have for the past 18 years, and being told there is little or no funding to help. For adopted young people there is ample evidence that if an adoption breaks down, the cost to the public purse is far greater than the cost of providing access to therapeutic support, respite, etc. And that is apart from the insurmountable emotional costs of an adoption breakdown to all concerned. As Julie

Selywn's "Beyond the Adoption Order" research highlights, although many adoptions don't actually breakdown, the damage to relationships is significant and in my work for several adoption and fostering organisations I have heard of far too many parents splitting up, leaving one parent alone to deal with the exceptionally challenging behaviour of the child. Indeed our own daughter (also adopted) has been brought up thinking it's "normal" that every door in the house has a hole punched in it, the walls have gashes in them from furniture being thrown at them, the front door gets kicked in regularly and food is thrown all over the ceiling and walls. Thankfully, despite living in this environment she doesn't demonstrate any of these behaviours herself.

We are fortunate that she is entirely unaffected by any attachment issues herself and, despite her other additional needs, she has a clear pathway to adulthood and appropriate support from health, education and social care. We believe that this is probably because there are far clearer pathways for children with learning difficulties and other more common additional needs than there are for children with attachment issues. We hope that the imminently to be published NICE Guideline on Attachment will go some way to addressing the lack of support for children and young people with attachment issues.

## Question 1

What are your views on the recruitment, assessment and preparation of adopter parents?

This is an area that IS improving and Wales should be proud of its achievements in relation to England. However I have some concerns that speeding up adoption may mean assessments become less thorough and adoptive parents may not be completely prepared for coping with the challenges presented by some adopted children.

How could this be improved?

Focus on thorough, indepth assessments more than timescales.

## Question 2

What is your experience of and view of the matching process and support for the transition?

We need to recruit more adopters for sibling groups, older children and children with additional needs to avoid a mismatch of the types of adopters waiting to adopt and the types of children waiting to be adopted.

How could this be improved?

## Question 3

Do you think there is sufficient information and support for children and young people including access to quality life-story work?

No. In my contact with other adopters I'm aware that there is still a tendency to think that once children are placed for adoption, they are "safe" and life-story work is not a priority for the children's social workers.

How could this be improved?

Setting statutory guidance about timescales for provision of life story work and ensuring social workers have sufficient time to carry it out.

## Question 4

What post-adoption support for children, young people and families (including from social services, education, health and mental health services) is available and what more could be done in this area?

This is still a huge post-code lottery and also depends on the ability of adoptive parents to research what is needed and put pressure on professionals to provide appropriate support. Some schools are starting to offer twilight inset sessions about supporting children who have experienced early trauma and neglect and may have attachment issues. This is welcomed.

How could this be improved?

Post-graduate courses for teachers, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers should include training on attachment, early trauma and neglect and the significant impact this can have on children's development. I believe staff from housing depts, police, prisons and probation service should also be given similar training.