

Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill: stakeholder discussion

10 July 2024

Background

1. On 10 July, as part of our inquiry into the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill, the Health and Social Care Committee held a private, informal discussion with a group of care experienced young people. This was followed by a formal evidence session with a group of those young people who wished to participate. We are grateful to everyone who took part for sharing their views and experiences with us. We are also grateful to Voices from Care Cymru for their support in arranging this event.

2. We asked participants to consider:

- When children and young people are in care, how important is the placement they live in and why is that?
- What do you think are the main things that make a ‘good’ placement?
- What do you think about plans for a new law which wants to stop profit being made from care placements? Is this important and, if so, why?
- Do you think that children and young people are asked for their views and are listened to when decisions are being made about care placements for them?
- Some people have told us that councils might have problems creating enough new placements to fill the gap left by private providers, and that



meet the needs of children in care. Other people have told us that some children and young people might not fully realise some of the changes that might take place if we bring in a new law. What do you think about those views?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about this new law or about placements?

3. This note summarises the key points that came out of our discussions.

Key points

4. It is very important that our placements are close to our home area so we can see our friends and stay in our own school. We want to be close to people we know and to have contact with our family when that is a safe thing to do. We get moved a lot and it is hard to fit into new communities. The placement should be made aware of any family contact needs or arrangements in advance, and should be able to meet them.

5. It is very important to match the young person to the placement. Young people should not be put in unsuitable placements, knowing they are likely to break down. Putting young people in unsuitable placements can lead to them becoming “placement jumpers”, where that young person moves placements frequently because their placements are not best suited to their needs.

6. We want caring people and not to be mistreated. We want to be shown love and affection so that we can build trust and healthy relationships. Care experienced children struggle because of lack of attention and love. Lots have attachment issues.

7. We want safe, secure placements. We want a place to call ‘home’ without being worried about being moved on. Where a move has to happen, we should be given a reasonable amount of notice. We should also be accompanied by our own social worker, rather than a duty social worker who we probably won’t know.

8. We want siblings to be able to stay together. Local authorities don’t want to pay the extra money to keep siblings together, and there is less chance of a private placement keeping siblings together because of the pricing element. *One young person told us that she had never lived with her siblings because they had additional needs and so had a ‘higher tariff’, but the foster parents were not willing to take her because she did not have additional needs and so had a ‘lower tariff’.*

- 9.** We want carers to be properly trained to support us, particularly in mental health matters. Training should have been completed before the placement starts, rather than during the placement itself. Carers need to stop using threats of secure placements and deprivation of liberty orders when they can't manage a young person's behaviour.
- 10.** Money from placements should be re-invested in services and training for care experienced children. We want better mental health services, nice food and a bed. Placements for children with learning difficulties make more money.
- 11.** We support removing profit. Money from care should be used to support young people not to make a profit. But we have concerns that, if profit is removed, some companies will stop providing care and leave. Care isn't stable at the moment. Where will young people go if companies stop providing care, especially those with additional needs?
- 12.** Young people don't always know if it is a profit or not-for-profit placement. Children in care want to be looked after by people who treat you as if they were your own. They "don't want to be advertised with a price tag". *Two siblings said that, in one placement, they could tell the carers were doing it for the money. One young woman had been in a for-profit placement far from home. She said "I was isolated and alone and had no bond with the carer. I barely saw her. I just felt I was there to pay her bills. I felt worthless."*
- 13.** We want placements that can provide for our language/cultural needs. *One young person told us that she had come from a Welsh speaking family, but had been placed with foster carers who were not Welsh speakers. She said she had struggled with the placement because she was not confident in speaking English when she was young.*
- 14.** We don't really trust local authorities with this. We've all been let down for so long. If the law is passed, there should be strong rules about what local authorities have to do and the government should check this is being done. There should be consequences if it isn't.
- 15.** There should be more transparency with a not-for-profit system. People should be able to know where the money is being spent, and who is getting it, like doctors and education. They should be able to identify who is responsible when things go wrong.
- 16.** Foster parents should have to give some information about themselves in advance of a placement; similar to the 'one-page profile'. Young people should

have some control over their own one-page profile, rather than having it written about them by someone else.

17. There should be investment in leaving care. It's stressful thinking of paying rent, getting a car, working, paying for a phone.

18. It's important to sort out the 'When I am ready scheme'. At the moment, it's only possible for young people not in work and for those in foster care.