Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus / Public Accounts Committee
Ymchwiliad i blant a phobl ifanc sydd wedi bod mewn gofal / Inquiry into care experienced children and young people
PAC(5) CECYP - 01
Ymateb gan Tros Gynnal Plant a NYAS (Y Gwasanaeth Eiriolaeth Ieuenctid Cenedlaethol) Cymru / Evidence from Tros Gynnal Children and NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) Wales

1. **It is our view that the overall cost to and value for money of the range public services aimed at improving outcomes for Care Experienced Young People would be;**

a) Enhanced by the involvement of LAC advocates outside of the statutory active offer entitlement, for example, return interviews by independent LAC advocates when children go missing from care or are arrested by police and subjected to the judiciary system; this would ensure they are accessing their rights and entitlements.

b) Enhanced by the involvement of Independent Visitors as per the revised legislative guidelines. The access to an IV service is currently not transparent or equal in terms of access across Wales.

c) The resources for LAC children/young people need to be linked to other public spending particularly on leisure, art, cultural events, sport, transport etc. which are sponsored or provided by the local authority. We believe care experienced children and young people should access these services for free across Wales. More collaborative working could be achieved across public sector to achieve this.

2. **Our view on whether the WG desired outcomes for Care Experienced CYP are being delivered by the current levels of public expenditure is outlined below;**

a) Whereas we welcome the commitment and improvement to the educational attainment of looked after children, and CCfW Raising Ambitions Report 2016 along with the "When I am ready" initiative. We need to know these outcomes are being monitored and evaluated for the long term.

b) We currently do not have an outcomes framework to measure the impact of statutory advocacy intervention.

c) We are concerned as to how the deployment of pupil development grant is being implemented and monitored and are aware that the leaving care grant is not equitable across Wales. Therefore young people do not access their full rights and entitlements when going through transition to adulthood.

d) The responsibility of being accountable for LA expenditure for LAC should reside with Corporate Parents to compare the impact of outcomes framework with the level of expenditure per authority.

3. From our experience it is our view that the extent of spending specific to care experienced young people is <u>not</u> balanced across the range of public services.

"Local Authorities are hamstrung by the year on year funding model that means that middle managers budgets often make placement decisions on in year budget considerations rather than based on the best interests of the child over the whole life time of the child" (Prison Reform Trust "In Care Out of Trouble" 2016)

As advocacy providers we undertake cases where evidence of care plans are not always inclusive of the views of children and young people. Their views, wishes and feelings are not always taken into account and foster placements are not seen as a long term option for children/young people but a holding solution before adoption or return home or other outcome which may become a reality.

4. We do not feel public bodies have placed sufficient emphasis on a long term preventative spend approach in line with the wellbeing of future generations (Wales) Act 2015, to maximise the benefits of public expenditure for this group of children.

We have concerns about the commitment long term funding for Welsh Government policies and initiatives for example the current financial improvements to enable LAC to access their statutory advocacy entitlements. We are very concerned that in 2019 this current level of funding will be absorbed to the revenue support grant with no sanctions to ensure that it sustained at the current level.