

Value for money and the effectiveness of current arrangements.

Information and working context of Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We currently run 94 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with 17 of the 22 local authorities. In 2016-17, we worked with 8,250 children, young people and families directly and many more through less direct work; including open groups and outreach work. Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, community development projects, family support for children affected by parental imprisonment, domestic abuse and parental substance misuse, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation, and young people's substance misuse services.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different, but each believes that every child and young person deserves the best start in life, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better child and social care policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around. Our work aims to support stronger families, safer childhoods and positive futures for those we work with in order to secure better outcomes for more children.

Leaving care services.

Barnardo's Cymru deliver services directly to care leavers in three local authorities and work with care leavers in other services that address youth homelessness, substance misuse and CSA/CSE/HSB services.

Between the ages of 16 and 18, young people have a social worker and a personal adviser (PA) but, on leaving care at 18, their relationship with their social worker ends and the PA assumes the central organisational and relational role in their lives.

The number of young people in care aged 16 and 17 rose by almost a third between 2010 and 2016,¹ swelling the numbers of those leaving care services aged 18–21. Meanwhile, the funding for PA services in many areas has either remained the same or decreased.

Currently, the pressure on some PA services is making it increasingly difficult for PA's to deliver the high-quality support young people require – or, in some cases, to meet their statutory duties with regard to the care leavers they work with. In 2015, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) reported that 'not all care leavers had a Pathway Plan'.²

To address this issue Barnardo's Cymru believes it's time to consider how the capacity of PA resources can be increased, delegated and supported, or whether there is a need for increased investment to meet the current case demands.

Fostering and fostering providers:

As a foster care provider Barnardos' Cymru are concerned about the lack of clarity in the financial remuneration to foster carers, the cost and quality of additional support services provided to foster families and how these relate to outcomes for fostered children and young people. There is no financial benchmark relating to level or degree of service which might support consistent financial remuneration and level of service delivery across Local Authority, Voluntary and Independent sector providers. Moreover without clear data relating to cost, level of service support and quality of provision it is impossible to assess what is effective in delivering good outcomes for young people.

This issue is discussed in the National Fostering Framework Phase One Report 2015–16³ and, more recently, The National Fostering Framework Wales – Foster

¹ Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age. StatsWales, 2016.

² National Inspection of safeguarding and care planning of Looked after Children and Care Leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours.

³ <http://www.adsscymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/NFF-Phase-One-Report-English.pdf>

care allowances and payments survey 2016–17 evidences the significant inequity that exists across Local Authority and Voluntary sector services. The Independent sector did not participate in the survey, however the survey report notes that ‘one can hypothesise that one of the factors that influence many foster carers to remain with independent providers is that allowances and fees are comparatively higher than local authority providers’.⁴

⁴https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/www.fostering.net/files/content/feesandallowances_tfnw.pdf