



News Release

Children's Commissioner for Wales calls for consistency and fairness as he launches a resource for young people and report for practitioners

As the number of looked after children and young people living in Wales continues to climb, a new resource and report have today (13 July) been published by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, highlighting the inconsistent support and lack of accurate information available to vulnerable young people.

Responding to concerns raised with him by young people, the Children's Commissioner set about working with young people in care from across Wales to produce a resource to help make the successful transition from care into independent living.

The resource, *My Planner*, includes advice and information on areas including health, education, social services and independent living skills. It outlines young people's rights and entitlements and, where possible, signposts them on to other organisations for further advice and support. It is intended that every young person in care will receive a copy of *My Planner* on their 15th birthday from the local authority.

Accompanying the resource is a report for government, practitioners and service providers, outlining the experiences of young people about the difficulties they face living in care.

This report, *Lost After Care*, highlights the significant efforts of some practitioners and local authorities in going that extra mile to meet their responsibilities as corporate parents. It also focuses on the disparity in services and information provided to young people as they start planning for their move into independent living. Young people spoke about:

- Support: "We got help at the beginning but it all faded away"
- Education: "Why are you discriminating against me because I choose to work?"
- Social Workers: "I had six workers in three years"
- Independent living: "It's forced on you too young... it kind of ruins your childhood"

It concludes with a series of suggested service improvements for the Welsh Government, local authorities and for the inspectorates, to encourage better coordinated response by local authority departments in identifying and responding to the rights and entitlements of young people moving on to independent living. Also included are



suggestions around the importance for local authorities to scrutinise delivery of services to ensure they are as effective and consistent as possible.

On the publication of his report and resource for young people, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Keith Towler, said:

"As we mark the tenth year of the Office of the Children's Commissioner, it felt right to listen and to give a national platform to the voice to children and young people in care – whose experiences all those years ago instigated the appointment of an independent champion for children.

"Listening to their views and experiences over the last few months has shown that there have been significant improvements in the way we support this vulnerable group. However, there are still frustrating inconsistencies, leaving young people feeling isolated, feeling like a case number not a person, feeling as if they're forced to grow up and move on too quickly.

"I'm hoping the resource will become a practical tool to ensure young people from across Wales have access to relevant, consistent and up-to-date information as they start planning to move into independent living. The other report I'll be publishing today will hopefully focus the minds of professionals, who have a duty to protect these young people. We need to hear what young people are telling us and act. To listen and do nothing is unacceptable."

My Planner and *Lost After Care* will both be launched at the Senedd, at an event hosted by Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding AM. Joining the practitioners and young people in care will be Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM.

ENDS

Notes to editors

For more information or to arrange an interview with the Children's Commissioner for Wales please contact Sara Young, Communications Officer, on 01792 765638 or sara.young@childcomwales.org.uk

Figures: Latest figures show that on 31 March 2010, there were 5,162 children and young people in Wales who were looked after

Corporate Parenting: This is where parental responsibilities are exercised by elected councillors at local authority level.



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