



HIDDEN AMBITIONS

One year on:

A follow up report on local authorities' progress and good practice in supporting care leavers

Care leavers need the same sort of **opportunities, assistance** and **support** that all parents try to give their children as they start to **make** their way in the **world.**



HIDDEN AMBITIONS

Achieving the best for young people leaving care

Review of Local Authority Progress

**Foreword by Sally Holland,
Children's Commissioner for Wales**

It is one year since the publication of my 'Hidden Ambitions' report which looked at the support available to young people leaving care, in relation to housing, education and training opportunities and personal and emotional support.

The response from the Welsh Government and local authorities to this report has been strong; it has been recognised that the views of care experienced children are really important in shaping services to meet their needs and I have been encouraged by the openness in how the report recommendations have been taken forward.

Each local authority has started from a different place in their journey but I am pleased that efforts are being made across Wales to enhance the offer that is given to young people as they move into independence.

This follow up report highlights areas of progress and good practice, but also raises some important points around finances and council tax in particular that have not progressed as far in the year to date. I look forward to continuing to work with national and local government, and care experienced children and young people, to carry on monitoring the progress against the original report recommendations and moving toward a Wales that provides suitable support to all its care leavers to enable them to achieve their ambitions.

March 2018

Acknowledgement

This follow up report has been prepared for me by Rhian Allen and Catrin Awoyemi of Practice Solutions Ltd. I am grateful to them for their time and effort in following up enquiries with local authorities and in drawing this information together to form this report. I am pleased to be able to share examples from across Wales and encourage local authorities to continue their efforts in providing support and opportunities to care leavers in their area.



INTRODUCTION

In March 2017 we published our 'Hidden Ambitions' report which highlighted the need to ensure that children leaving care have an 'equal chance to be the best they can be as they approach adulthood'.

Following the launch of the report, we visited each local authority to identify how they would implement the findings of the report in their area. We then wrote to each local authority following those meetings to summarise the discussions, and noted the actions that were proposed at each meeting in order to put in place new provision or develop existing provisions to better suit the needs of their care leavers. Each local authority had different strengths and provisions in place, but what was important was to listen to their particular cohort of children and young people in order to meet their needs and be accountable to them.

We asked each local authority to report on how they would develop and build upon their services for young people leaving care. We asked for the reports to be addressed primarily to their young people, prepared in collaboration with them and presented in a suitable format such as a letter, leaflet or video. We asked to be copied in to these in order to monitor progress against the commitments made in the initial meetings. This report is an analysis of those responses relating to how local authorities are responding to the report recommendations and their individual commitments. We also highlight challenges and areas of good practice.

The report is structured along these three areas:

- **Support for all** – including support up to the age of 25 whether or not they are in education or training
- **Housing and income** – including sufficient planning and support for moving into their own place
- **Opportunities** – as Corporate Parents, local authorities should act like a 'large family business'.

Background

The information provided to us has been reviewed and analysed against the original report recommendations, to identify where local authorities are meeting them or where progress is being made.

We had asked local authorities to report back to us by the end of October 2017 with their progress; we received responses from 21 local authorities. Further to the analysis of these responses, gaps in information were then identified and a survey was sent to the 22 local authorities in early 2018. 17 local authorities provided responses to this survey.

The information available has informed the content of this report.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Encourage all local authority members, as **Corporate Parents, to provide training and apprenticeship opportunities** for looked after children and care leavers, in their 'family business'.

Support for young people needs to be proactively offered by carers and support workers, to help them to prepare for and access training schemes.

What authorities have achieved

Access to training and job opportunities is one of the areas local authorities should consider for care leavers as part of the 'large family business'. The responses from local authorities indicate that this element is being met at various levels through a range of schemes including apprenticeships, work experience, volunteering and training opportunities both within local authorities and in some areas with local businesses.

How authorities are meeting the recommendations

The responses from the 21 local authorities in follow up to the meetings were positive about the opportunities they provide to care leavers to support them into employment and training.

Some authorities have made more progress than others with well-established support and opportunities in place for care leavers. The more established schemes have a specified number of training or apprenticeship opportunities each year within the authority that care leavers can apply for. They have also made links with local support services from the third sector to enhance the support provided.

There are **positive outcomes** reported in three of the authorities where young people have progressed to permanent employment within the authority.

Some local authorities have identified a need to strengthen the opportunities made available to care leavers and are actively developing or reviewing these to enhance the offer.

All local authorities reported supporting their care leavers with equipment for work, study and training, smart clothes for interviews and cost of transport, which includes support with learning to drive. The majority of the funding for these resources was from the new St David's Day bursary fund. According to information from the Welsh Government's Ministerial Advisory Group on Improving Outcomes for Children, as at December 2017, reports from 18 local authorities noted that 411 young people had already benefitted from the fund.

Challenges

Authorities have not reported specific challenges in relation to this element of the support for care leavers. There are however gaps in some local authorities where links with local businesses have not been made or opportunities are restricted to what the local authority can offer 'in house'.

Having links with local businesses can open up a wider range of skills development for young people that may not be available in the local authority.

What has worked well

The below are examples showing a commitment by local authorities to directly support care leavers to access training and apprenticeships within the local authorities and in some areas with local employers.

- **Conwy** have a human resources officer who takes the lead on providing work opportunities and apprenticeships for care leavers within the authority.
- **Rhondda Cynon Taf** have a specific team called Care 2 Work whose remit is designed to work with care leavers; they also have strong links with local businesses for work/training opportunities.
- **Ceredigion** are appointing a NEET care leaver project worker to establish and access trainee placements and apprenticeships.
- **Monmouthshire** have a project worker to support care leavers overcome barriers to training and employment.

The responses from local authorities relating to trainee schemes showed the majority had specific schemes that care leavers could access. Some care leavers had progressed on the schemes and either been employed by the local authority or gone on to study in their chosen area.

Cardiff reported that their Looked After Children Traineeship scheme was working well with 34 referrals in the first quarter of 2017/18. Of the 34 referred, 20 engaged in the scheme with 15 starting in a traineeship placement and 5 completing taster days.

Swansea's Corporate Buildings Services Department are keen to ensure that young people leaving care are supported to apply for the apprenticeship opportunities they have every year and they have three care leavers currently completing apprenticeships with them.



Swansea's Beyond Bricks and Mortar scheme aims to secure community benefits from all suitable council activities and contracts. By introducing community benefit clauses such as targeted recruitment and training into contracts, they aim to ensure that members of the community, especially young people and those who have been out of the job market for some time are given opportunities of meaningful training and employment. Care leavers are one of the priority groups able to access these opportunities and the leaving care service regularly receives updates as and when these arise.

Many authorities in north and south Wales have also linked into schemes that were not specifically for care leavers, but take into account their needs and so were seen as a priority group who could access support.

The two main links are:

North Wales – Ad Track is a regional strategic project providing a multi-agency partnership approach to support vulnerable young people between the ages of 16 and 24 into work, education or training. The scheme is open to those who are NEET, living in north Wales and experiencing barriers preventing them from progressing into education, employment or training. Leaving care services in local authorities have made links with the scheme ensuring that care leavers are able to access the services that provide emotional support as well as support in employability matters.

South Wales – Inspire to Work is for young people aged between 16 and 24 years who are experiencing barriers to training and employment. This scheme, as above, provides individual support to young people to improve their skills that are in demand by employers.

A new development in response to Hidden Ambitions is the 'Peering Ahead' partnership between Voices from Care and National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) led by NYAS. The scheme involves peer mentors who are care leavers or have an understanding of the issues people in care may face and is open to care leavers between the ages of 15 and 25 years. The mentors support the care leavers with their employment/education goals. Caerphilly 16+ service have engaged with the scheme and have agreed that the mentors will also provide low level support for wider issues that may be a barrier to achieving those goals. They are now working with NYAS to develop a process whereby young people will be offered a peer mentor and where the team in Caerphilly can identify potential mentors.



HOUSING AND INCOME

Local authorities should be using the Welsh Government's Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood and the **Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework** developed by Barnardo's as guidance for all those working with the care leavers.

All young people leaving care should have a consistent and transparent package of financial support, underpinned by **clear information on the money and grants that they can access when they leave care.** It is important that young people across Wales **have access to clear information on benefit entitlements, how to make a claim and who to contact for support or advice.**

What authorities have achieved

There is evidence that local authorities are providing appropriate accommodation where it is available but there are also challenges. Local authorities describe very close links with housing colleagues including joint assessment and joint working arrangements. In some local authorities, panels are used where young people's options are discussed to identify suitable housing options based on their needs.

Financial information is available but not always in an accessible format for young people.

How authorities are meeting the recommendations

The Accommodation and Support Framework identifies five stages to support care leavers when they are moving into their own accommodation and moving on. The five stages, which are linked to the responses from local authorities, are discussed in this section.

First stage

Helping young people in care to gain skills in preparation for independence is included in the first stage. The survey asked: '**Do you provide opportunities for care leavers to prepare them for moving to their own place?**' Of the 12 authorities who responded to this question, 8 stated that they do provide these opportunities and 4 do not.

In their written responses two local authorities stated they provide training flats for young people to stay in to prepare them for having their own place.

Tenancy preparation courses were also provided by four local authorities. The courses help to prepare young people for having their own place and holding a tenancy.

Second stage

The second stage is planning accommodation and support options with the young people and giving them as much notice as possible for this move.

There is some evidence from the original responses and survey that there is a good working relationship between housing and social work teams. There are good examples of joint working and planning for young people moving from care to independence.

The support to plan for a young person's move into independence is undertaken through:

- Monthly meetings identifying young people who will need supported accommodation and the housing options
- Panels including housing providers and accommodation support services for young people
- Joint assessment to identify the most suitable housing provider/support
- Co-located housing support workers and officers in with the child care teams.

Local authorities were asked at what age the planning starts for moving on to independence and of the 11 who answered the average age is 16, the youngest age is 15.

Third stage

The third stage is reducing housing crisis for when young people experience difficulties in maintaining their accommodation and the support needed to get them back on track.

The avoidance of bed and breakfast is a clear priority for many local authorities, although some do report still using these types of accommodation in crisis situations where there is no other alternative.

Local authorities are willing to provide financial support to some young people where they are in financial difficulties and likely to be made homeless. There are good examples of services working together to find the most effective option to support a young person in crisis including identifying young people who are struggling early. Personal advisers also play a significant role in supporting young people in crisis working with other support staff such as tenancy support workers, providers and housing officers to ensure young people do not become homeless.

Fourth stage

The fourth stage is being able to access housing and support as needed as they will have different needs, which will need to be reflected in the type of housing and support that is provided for them.

The planning process is evident in many authorities to ensure that young people are able to access housing suitable to their needs. There is evidence of good joint working with housing services/providers to ensure a range of options are available. Supported accommodation is provided through 'Supporting People' in many places, which provides different levels of support depending on the needs of the young people. Many authorities work with Llamau, especially those in South Wales.

Specific accommodation is available in some areas, e.g. Vale of Glamorgan offers accommodation for one or two young people who struggle to live in larger supported accommodation. Starter flats are also available to enable young people to experience independent living and develop their understanding and skills for living in rented accommodation. Authorities also have 'move on' panels, which consider the ability of the young people to move on from supported accommodation into their own accommodation.

There are challenges to be able to provide accommodation and 7 of the 14 authorities who wrote responses in relation to this point are either reviewing their accommodation availability or working with housing services to ensure appropriate accommodation is commissioned for young people.

Fifth stage

The fifth stage relates to ensuring young people are ready to move on to longer term accommodation and their own tenancy. They also need to know where to go when they run into difficulties in the future.

Ceredigion and Denbighshire local authorities act as guarantor for young people to support them into their own tenancies, which increases the availability of suitable accommodation.

Working with agencies to prevent homelessness is also in place for some authorities with some linking this into work on developing 'Positive Pathways'. Three of the local authorities were developing a 'Positive Pathways' approach to improve accommodation options and support care leavers. There is also evidence of support with

links being made with tenancy support officers to help care leavers when they run into difficulties, personal advisers providing information, and early identification of care leavers who are running into difficulties with their rent.

Financial information and support

Clear easily accessible information about financial support is provided by some authorities but not others. From the 13 responses to the survey question: **'Do you provide clear easily accessible information about financial support available to care leavers?'** 7 stated 'yes' and 6 stated 'no'.

Information from the seven local authorities was provided in various formats through social media, website, short videos, leaflets and face-to-face. Face-to-face information varies from their personal adviser and pathway planning to drop-in services that are able to support care leavers with various financial matters. Isle of Anglesey have a short, animated video that care leavers can access which provides information on what they can get help with and relevant contact details.

Although the other six authorities answered 'no', they do have policies in place or provide information through the personal adviser service and pathway plans. Three authorities stated that they had financial policies, one stating that it was not 'young person' friendly and the other two authorities stating that they were or would be working with their care leavers forums to develop a young person's version.





The importance of having financial information and support available to care leavers is significant and the complexity of some information relating to benefits from housing to employment support can be daunting. There is a need to provide a range of information to ensure that care leavers are able to maintain their accommodation and themselves and to be able to attend training and employment.

The information must be available from more than one source, which some authorities have indicated they provide in written form and face-to-face. Written information needs to be clear and having a young person's version is a helpful step, but this needs to be supported by information available from other sources such as their personal adviser or welfare support services.

The authorities who responded to the letters and the follow-up survey outlined that they provided a range of financial support to care leavers including first home grants, education incentive and financial support for equipment for work or training and college courses.

Local authorities were also asked **'Have you implemented a Council Tax reduction or waiver for care leavers?'** Thirteen local authorities responded to this question. Six local authorities responded that they had not currently implemented a scheme but were looking into this; five local authorities had implemented a scheme and two had not and were not planning to.

Challenges

When asked **'What barriers are there to providing access to suitable housing for care leavers?'**, local authorities identified lack of housing stock as the main barrier to providing suitable housing. This is not simply numbers of housing but lack of suitable housing:

- Supported accommodation for people with complex needs
- Lack of single person accommodation
- Lack of accommodation in areas people want to live.

Private rents are often too high or landlords do not want to rent to care leavers when other tenants are ready to take on their properties.

Care experienced young people who had been consulted in Caerphilly said that there was a limited choice of accommodation and that these were in the more deprived areas. These options are away from the young people's support networks, which made them feel isolated and vulnerable. The young people also identified issues with lack of suitable accommodation options for those with mental health difficulties, especially in shared/communal accommodation.

There is a strong commitment from the local authorities to improve the options available for care leavers. They are actively working with housing and supporting people providers to review options, plan and ensure that accommodation is suitable to the needs of vulnerable young people. There are examples of teams working together to remodel the offer for care leavers and working jointly to recommission accommodation so that it meets the identified needs.

In relation to financial information, the main area of concern identified by some authorities was the implementation of Universal Credit and the complexities this will hold for care leavers. Some have arranged or are arranging for welfare rights services within the local authorities to be available to provide support to care leavers where required.

What has worked well

Swansea have developed an 'Accommodation Pathway'. This panel brings together supported housing providers, with representatives from social services, BAYS youth homelessness service and the housing department. The panel receives referrals for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 with accommodation needs. Should a young person experience instability with their housing, this will be brought and discussed at the Pathway panel and members look for creative ideas to work with the young person to limit their risk of homelessness. Working with colleagues in housing, they are able to identify money within the Prevention Fund allowing them to place additional support around a young person where there are concerns about tenancy breakdown. Referrals for this are made via the 'Accommodation Pathway'.

Cardiff developed a Youth Gateway two years ago, which works with housing and looks at the best way to help young people into the right accommodation and support. They have not had any young people in bed and breakfast accommodation since the Youth Gateway started. They also now have more training flats available with pre-tenancy support.

Torfaen hold monthly meetings with representatives from the housing benefit department, social landlords, council tax officers and homelessness officers to look at tenancies held by care leavers. If it is identified they are struggling, appropriate support is provided.

Rhondda Cynon Taf have developed a website called Two Sides (see link below), which provides easy read information about being in care and includes information on leaving care. The information is broken down into sections that are easy to read and understand for young people. Included in the site is information on financial support that young people leaving care will receive and who to ask for advice. Voices from Care contributes to the website.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ChildrenandFamilies/LookedAfterChildren/WelcometoTwoSides.aspx>

SUPPORT FOR ALL

All young people leaving care should be able to access **support up to the age of 25** (whether or not they are in education/training).

Local authorities should consider setting up **forums or discussion groups just for care leavers.**

Social services, housing and education **departments should all work together** to help plan a young person's move to living independently consistent with the ways of working under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

There should be more of **a focus placed by local authorities and carers on developing young people's skills for independence.**

What authorities have achieved

There is progress in some local authorities relating to increasing the support for care leavers up to the age of 25. Authorities who have not yet implemented the increase are looking at how they can increase resources to be able to provide an effective service.

Many local authorities have forums and groups in place who are involved in consultation activities, some of which have been in place for some time. There are differences in the composition of groups and activities they undertake with some being a mix of young people, not necessarily just care leavers.

Some local authorities have started to engage with carers to start the process of developing skills for independence whilst children are in care. There are still many who are starting this work when young people are care leavers, which can be too late and lead to difficulties coping with financial pressures and domestic chores.

Local authorities also work with other departments and services to support care leavers with some being included in the pathway planning process. Being involved at this stage is key as this is the stage at which young people are planning their move to independence and the engagement of others ensures effective planning.

How local authorities are meeting the recommendations

Support to 25

Local authorities were asked whether they provide support up to the age of 25, irrespective of whether the young people are in education or training; 16 authorities responded with 12 stating they had increased the age and 4 who had not. However, those who have not currently implemented the increase were looking to recruit more personal advisers to enable support to be put in place. It is encouraging to see the progress being made by the local authorities to ensure young people are supported for longer.

Forums

There are forums in place for children and young people in local authorities with some being for both looked after and leaving care, and others just for young people leaving care. The survey asked local authorities if they had a care leavers' forum and of the 15 who responded 9 indicated that they do with 6 stating they did not; however, 3 of the authorities have indicated that they are working to establish a care leavers group. In addition to the survey, there were four local authorities who also stated they have forums, two specifically for care leavers, the others being youth engagement groups.

Working in partnership

Working in partnership with housing and education ensures there is a holistic approach to planning the long-term future for care leavers. If this is undertaken effectively, the outcomes for care leavers are likely to be more positive. Some authorities have said how they currently work closely with housing services to support care leavers. However, links with education are less evident and it is not clear from the information provided how the three services work together. There are examples of education liaison officers working with the leaving care teams where a young person is planning to remain in education when leaving care. Some authorities have education and social services under the same directorate, which provides links between the two services, but there is no clear evidence of how this is working. Some authorities include education in the pathway planning process, but the personal adviser then appears to provide the ongoing support for the care leaver.

Engaging carers in developing skills

Engaging carers in supporting young people to develop skills as they grow up in care is an important element of preparation for leaving care. As many families do with their own children, getting them to help with cooking and baking and helping with chores around the house, it is important that children in foster care are also included in these activities.

It is encouraging to see that 15 local authorities responded 'yes' to the survey question '**Are carers/residential settings trained/required to provide support to children in their care to develop their skills for independence?**'.

Formal responses from local authorities included examples of how some are implementing this in practice such as in Denbighshire where training and support for foster carers in respect of independent living skills is in place. Conwy report working towards provision of dedicated training for foster carers and providers of accommodation to help them support and coach young people to develop their independent living skills.

Challenges

Working in partnership

Joint working between social services, housing and education is not always evident. There is some evidence of good links between social services and housing to support care leavers. However, from the responses received the link with education is less clear, only one local authority reported a link between the education liaison officer and support for care leavers. Clarity is needed to identify the joint working between all three services.

Engaging carers in developing skills

Whilst the responses to the question relating to support are positive, there are challenges in ensuring that young people are provided with and engage in support whilst in care. One local authority who had consulted with care leavers asked them about the use of a checklist for independence provided to foster carers to help them gain independence skills; only one of the six young people recognised the checklist.

There are still many authorities who are providing independence skills support to young people when they are leaving care; this is too late. Whilst local authorities have said that they require/train carers and accommodation providers to develop independence skills, there needs to be clarity about when and how this is provided. Where young people are receiving the support at the point they transfer to leaving care, they are facing many challenges. Having the additional stresses of not having the basic skills to live independently will add to their anxiety of moving from a safe nurturing environment to independence.

What has worked well

Local authorities have some innovative and effective projects that have worked well including the following.

Pembrokeshire have a Supper Club, which is for care leavers to meet weekly and is an opportunity for care leavers to socialise and develop skills such as cooking and budgeting. The club is also a forum for consultation with care leavers. The club serves several purposes: to reduce isolation, to develop skills and to seek their views on service design and delivery.

In Conwy, the Shaping Futures Forum is a group of young people who have been in care and have moved on and whose members want to provide support and be mentors to other care leavers. They meet every six weeks and are currently involved in producing a young person friendly guide on the updated Financial Policy for Care Leavers.

Torfaen's decisions relating to the way finances are spent are scrutinised by senior management and they are in the process of engaging young people to form a scrutiny committee.

Responding to Hidden Ambitions - How Local Authorities have fed back on progress

The majority of information from local authorities included how they were keeping the young people up to date with how they are progressing after the Hidden Ambitions report. This was something that we had asked each local authority to commit to when we met, to ensure that there was accountability and up to date information for the young people in each local authority area.

The responses varied with some authorities providing written feedback to young people, others took the opportunity to consult with young people on their views based on the themes within the report, others plan to consult with their young people. Two local authorities have used video and animation clips as part of their response to the young people.

Those who have undertaken consultation have been able to identify priority areas which they have agreed to progress in stages. Caerphilly invited young people to the Corporate Parenting Group following the consultation and a commitment was made to resolve agreed issues arising from the consultation.

Swansea have included three video clips on their YouTube channel (see link below) which provides information on what they should expect, who they can speak to and how they can get support. Anglesey developed an animation clip (see link below) which gives information from the pathway planning stage to leaving care. Consultation with 8 young people relating to the content was positive and this is now available on the council web site, YouTube and Facebook as well as being available in the reception of the main Council offices. Anglesey also aim to use the clip in looked after children reviews when young people are 16 years old.

It is encouraging to see that local authorities are providing young people with information on how they are responding to Hidden Ambitions. The different and innovative approaches taken to ensure the information is widely available is ensuring they are well informed. The engagement with young people shows a commitment to involve them in the process and to understand the issues they face and how they can be overcome.

Swansea YouTube link
<https://www.youtube.com/user/swanseacitycouncil>

Anglesey animation link:
<https://www.powtoon.com/c/cGN6QoOF4vb/2/m>

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst in some local authorities much of the support recommended by the Hidden Ambitions report was already in place, it has provided focus for all local authorities on what care leavers need to be able to achieve and be 'the best they can be as they approach adulthood'.

The impact of the Hidden Ambitions report has been a positive one, but with progress still to be made in some areas. The responses from the local authorities show a commitment to developing their offer to care leavers based on the recommendations and show the progress that is being made. The below quote is from one response to the survey:

'I have seen a more targeted approach to this issue over the last year. It is a positive drive which needs to be sustained going forward.'

There are some areas of good practice and sharing these will provide a mechanism for authorities to learn from each other. It is acknowledged that what works in one area does not necessarily fit in another, but the concept and learning from the experiences of others is a good way forward.

It is encouraging to see that local authorities are also planning ahead, especially in relation to changes in benefit with the implementation of Universal Credit. There is also evidence of planning in the development of appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of care leavers.

Overall, the commitment of local authorities to meeting the needs of care leavers is evidenced by building on already established practice and moving forward to develop the offer available to this vulnerable group of young people.



WHAT'S NEXT

The report highlights a range of examples of how things are being done across Wales to provide a holistic package of support. It is recognised that local authorities will be in different positions and start from different points in what they offer. By sharing information in this follow up report, we are able to continue to encourage those who work with care leavers to try different methods to make sure the support on offer meets their needs.

Below are some areas that we would particularly highlight to continue over the next year:

1. **Sharing good practice** – There is evidence of good working practice to support care leavers in many of the local authorities. Being aware of what other authorities are providing is not always possible in the daily running of services; therefore, a way of showcasing good practice would support the progress being made. We will write to each local authority annually to continue to monitor progress and identify examples of good practice that can be shared in order to maintain the commitments we have already seen to this work. We maintain a register of recommendations in order to follow up progress against these and the commitments that have been made to deliver change for children and young people; these are reported against in our annual reports.
 2. **Review partnership working** – It is not clear how education, social services and housing are working together in each local authority area to support care leavers. There is a need to identify how this is working, if there are barriers to working together and what those are so that they can be resolved. We would encourage local authorities to 'firm up' their arrangements to ensure that each department works together to support the young people in their area.
 3. **Clear financial information** – There is information made available to care leavers but it is not all accessible or in a format that is clear for all young people to understand. The information needs to be clear and whilst face-to-face support is effective, accessible written information is also important to reinforce what they have been told so they can go back to the information later. There also needs to be clarity within services as to the entitlement for care leavers from grants and funding within the local authority as this can also be a challenge for those working with care leavers.
 4. **Council Tax** – It is encouraging that a number of local authorities have taken formal steps within this year to exempt their care leavers from paying council tax. We would encourage all local authorities and the Welsh Government to continue to work together on this to ensure a consistent provision for care leavers across Wales and to contribute to tackling the relative poverty we identified for this group.
- As noted above it is really important** to sustain this positive drive to make sure that care leavers all across Wales feel the benefit of additional support and funding that is being made available. We will continue to work with local and national government and related partners to monitor progress against the original recommendations and the points raised in this follow up report, in order to ensure improved outcomes for our care experienced children in Wales

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FOOTNOTES

Young people featured in this report are models from Wales