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FOREWORD

Children who live apart from their families deserve and should expect to enjoy the same life chance benefits from education opportunities and health and social care as their peers. Reports arising from the investigations into abuse in North Wales children’s homes have highlighted the need for a co-operative approach between authorities, and with other agencies, in Wales to improve the quality and availability of placements for children looked after. The introduction of the Children First Programme in Wales has focused attention and resources on improving the outcomes for these children.

Information from authorities indicates that local strategies are not yet capable of providing placements to meet the needs of all children who need to be looked after. Some experience particular difficulty in providing placement choice and stability for children with complex needs who require specialist placements to meet them. This has serious implications for children who may be placed far from their families and communities. Such placements are only justified when their needs cannot be met, or they are likely to be at risk, in a placement nearer their homes.

The Welsh Assembly Government has set targets for local authorities to improve placement choice and stability for children looked after. It recognises a joint strategic approach to planning, commissioning and service delivery is necessary to achieve improvements for individual children and improve their life chances. Successful implementation of the strategic framework will require local authority and health services to work collaboratively within and across boundaries, and with independent agencies to plan, commission and ensure the delivery of the range of services and placement opportunities necessary to meet the needs of all looked after children, and to ensure better health, education and life outcomes for them.

Development of the strategic framework has taken place alongside the implementation of the CAMHS strategy “Everybody’s Business, which was launched in September 2001. The recommendations about inter-agency working, services for looked after children, and specialist residential services in the education and social care, as well as health sector are particularly relevant to improving placement choice and stability and meeting children's needs.
Work started on the development of this strategic framework in March 2001 and the process of consultation drew on representation from social services, education, health, housing, umbrella groups, voluntary agencies and private sector providers. We are grateful to Miss Adrianne Jones for her work in chairing the group and to the members of the task and sub-groups for their important contributions.

Jane Hutt AM
Minister for Health and Social Services

Jane Davidson AM
Minister for Education and Training
INTRODUCTION

Aim
The framework is intended to help social services authorities and their partner agencies fulfil their responsibilities and achieve the Children First objectives to increase placement choice and improve stability for looked after children. It will assist the development of local placement strategies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all looked after children.

Background

The Report of the Examination Team on Child Care Procedures and Practice in North Wales to the House of Commons in 1996 made a number of recommendations on strategic planning for children looked after. In 1997 the Welsh Office established a development fund which provided project grants to local authorities to assist in implementing the recommendations, including developing placement strategies as part of their strategic plans for children’s services.

The recommendations were reinforced by the recommendation of the North Wales Child Abuse Tribunal that local authorities should ensure an adequate range of foster care placements and residential care provision of appropriate quality, including secure provision, within reasonable reach of a child’s family or other relevant roots.

The National Assembly commissioned a study of the placement of children looked after from Cardiff University. The report provided a snapshot of the placement arrangements for children looked after in Wales on 1st February 2000. The survey found authorities had different approaches to managing, planning and providing services, but that all were experiencing some degree of difficulty in ensuring they could provide a range of placements to meet the needs of children looked after and promote their welfare.

The National Assembly for Wales launched its Children First programme in 1999 following the publication of the Review of Children’s Safeguards. The programme aims to improve the quality of life and promote the health, development and life chances of children in need. It recognises that in comparison to the general population children in need (particularly those looked after by local authorities) had significantly poorer health, lower educational achievements, higher involvement in criminal activities and greater exposure to social exclusion. The Children First Programme provided additional funding to local authorities on the basis of locally developed and delivered annual management action plans that addressed the programme’s objectives.

1 See Appendix One - Key Recommendations of the North Wales Examination and Inquiry Reports
2 The Government’s Response to the Children’s Safeguards Review - HMSO 1998
To achieve the Children First objectives social services education and health need a joint approach to planning, commissioning and delivering services designed to improve the welfare of children in need. The programme highlights the role and responsibilities of elected members of local authorities in developing corporate commitment to ensure the highest standards of care and services for looked after children.

Authorities are conducting service reviews, which include services for looked after children, to ensure they are achieving Best Value in the planning and delivery of services. This process includes examination of why services are delivered, what they are expected to achieve, and how they can be best commissioned and delivered to achieve local aspirations. The outcomes of the reviews will be significant in planning and commissioning and evaluating services.

The framework has been developed and will be implemented in the context of the challenges faced by statutory agencies and their partners in meeting the expectations of the public and the requirements of regulators for the delivery of high quality services. It recognises that the placement marketplace is changing and local authorities are experiencing difficulties in maintaining or accessing the range and numbers of placement opportunities required to ensure choice and stability for the children who need them. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in the social care sector are contributory to the pressures on the delivery of services. Appropriate education and health services are essential elements in supporting children and young people in placements and of delivering better outcomes for them. Whilst there have been many improvements in these areas there continue to be difficulties in accessing some of the critical services that children need. The changes in the structure of the NHS in Wales and the devolution of budgets has the potential for greater local responsiveness but may also create divergences in local priorities and problems in planning specialist services. Shifting the balance of provision - e.g. from looked after services to community support or from residential to foster care - raises management and resource challenges. The high cost of a small number of highly specialised placements and the impact on local authority and health budgets is a pressing issue across Wales. Investing to save and promoting long term policies requires clear planning and strong corporate and political commitment.
## SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

### DEVELOPMENT

1. The Assembly will establish an implementation and review group to:
   - promote implementation of and review the strategic framework
   - promote collaboration between services and local authorities
   - advise on commissioning of development work and research
   - contribute to dissemination of research findings, examples of good practice, and effective interventions in improving placement choice and stability
   - contribute to the review of the framework document  
   **Section 1.9**

2. Local authority and health services should work together to establish common criteria to assist them in identifying need, determining priorities, allocating resources and intervening effectively where individual children are recognised as in need  
   **Key Agencies:** Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 2.2**

3. Local authority and health services should work together to develop agreed definitions and methodologies for the collection, aggregation, comparison and interpretation of data for use in strategically planning to meet the needs of children who are looked after and likely to become looked after  
   **Key Agencies:** Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 3.1**

4. Social services authorities should develop comprehensive placement strategies that address key elements of defining need and demand, allocation of resources and commissioning and managing placements  
   **Key Agency:** Social Services - **Section 3.2**

5. The Welsh Assembly Government will commission work to help authorities identify the level of need for specialist placements across Wales  
   **Key Agencies:** Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 3.5**

6. When considering the development of specialist and intensive placements this strategic framework will be joined with the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy recommendations in relation to Tier 4 services  
   **Implementation and Review group - Section 3.5**

7. Local authority and health services need to ensure that they allocate sufficient resources to develop effective planning, commissioning and contracting arrangements, including monitoring contract compliance, to achieve required standards of care, positive outcomes for children, and best value.  
   **Key Agencies:** Social Services / Education / Health - **Section 4.2**
| 8 | Local authorities should collaborate with each other when this is likely to enable them to improve services and/or achieve better use of resources.  
*Key Agency:* Social Services - **Section 4.3** |
|---|---|
| 9 | Local authorities should consider investing in a national/regional placement information advisory service(s) to assist them in finding placements for individual children and strategic planning  
*Key Agency:* Social Services - **Section 4.3** |
| 10 | Health and local authority services should explore the potential for developing joint planning and commissioning of specialist placements and support services  
*Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Health - **Section 4.4** |
| 11 | Policy development, in respect of the availability of secure accommodation placements for looked after children should include consultation with the Youth Justice Board and take account of any changes in the availability of placements in local authority secure units resulting from the Youth Justice Board’s purchase of placements  
*Key Agencies:* Welsh Assembly Government/Local Authorities/Health/Youth Justice Board - **Section 4.5** |
| 12 | Models for managing demand and allocation of resources and services should be explored and developed  
*Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Health - **Section 5.2** |
| 13 | The Welsh Assembly Government will commission a review of the purpose, effectiveness, development and management of foster care services in Wales  
*Key Agencies:* National Assembly/Social Services/Independent Fostering Agencies - **Section 5.6** |
| 14 | Social services authorities should consider working together and with others to address matters related to the payment of allowances and fees to foster carers.  
*Key Agencies:* Social Services / Independent Fostering Agencies - **Section 5.6.3** |
| 15 | The Welsh Assembly Government will commission a review to consider the purpose and future shape of residential care services for children in Wales with the aim of establishing a cogent theoretical basis and strategic direction for the development of an effective, quality service.  
*Key Agencies:* Welsh Assembly Government/Social Services/Education/Health/Independent Providers - **Section 5.8.1** |
### POLICY AND PRACTICE

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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| 1 | Social services authorities are responsible for co-ordinating in partnership with education, health services and partner agencies in the independent sector, an integrated approach to assessment, care planning and review for individual children who are looked after.  
  **Key Agencies:** Social services/Education/Health/Independent sector - **Section 2** |
| 2 | Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that:  
  • each looked after child has a current care plan to meet their needs that is implemented effectively and reviewed as required  
  • looked after children have stable placements that meet their needs  
  **Key Agency:** Social Services - **Section 2** |
| 3 | Social services authorities should ensure that protocols are agreed with Health and education services, and partner agencies in the independent sector, to facilitate the early identification of children’s needs and availability of services to meet them.  
  **Key Agencies:** Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 2** |
| 4 | Permanence is an important factor in safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare and this should be reflected in care, service and strategic planning.  
  **Key Agency:** Social Services - **Section 2** |
| 5 | Placement stability is a service objective that contributes to safeguarding and promoting their welfare and development.  
  **Key Agency:** Social Services - **Section 2** |
| 6 | Local authorities must ensure that their elected members and officers understand and implement the authority’s corporate responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children that they look after.  
  **Key Agencies:** Local authority - **Section 2** |
| 7 | The health and education needs of children looked after must be met in the basis of social services authorities, health and education services working together, and in partnership with independent agencies to:  
  - co-ordinate assessments and care planning to meet the needs of individual children  
  - strategically plan and commission an appropriate and adequate services to meet the needs of looked after children in their area.  
  **Key Agencies:** Social Services /Education/Health - **Section 2** |
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| 8 | Local authorities and health services should continue to develop, and improve integrated working across social, health and education services.  
Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 2** |
| 9 | Local authority and health services should plan to commission services that meet children's needs, as close as possible to the children's home communities.  
Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 3** |
| 10 | Agencies providing services for children and their families should have policies and procedures that enable them to contribute to planning and evaluating services and promote equality.  
Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health/Independent providers - **Section 3** |
| 11 | Social services authorities must ensure that placement strategies include the mechanisms agreed with education and health services for accessing and financing specialist and intensive placements for children with complex needs. Placement strategies must address specific needs including those of disabled children and other groups referred to in this document.  
Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 3** |
| 12 | Local authority and health services must ensure when placing children outside of their area that the placement child's care, education, health and cultural needs can be met in the area where the placement is located.  
Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health - **Section 3** |
| 13 | The promotion of placement arrangements that meet children's needs requires:  
- compliance with regulations, guidance and good practice by placing authorities and provider organisations  
- local authorities, health agencies, independent organisations and individuals in the areas where placements are made to report any concerns about the adequacy of arrangements to the placing authority  
- regulation and inspection processes to include consideration of whether providers make adequate arrangements to ensure the health and education needs of children placed with them can be met.  
Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health/Care Standards Inspectorate Wales - **Section 3** |
| 14 | Agencies responsible for commissioning services should explore all available options for their delivery, taking account of their potential to deliver better outcomes for children and make optimum use of resources.  
Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health - **Section 4** |
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| 15 | **Local authorities and health services should consider whether they might appropriately use the capacity for flexibilities funding provided by the NHS Act to assist them in developing formal partnerships to improve services.**  
   *Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Health - **Section 4** |
| 16 | **The development of placement strategies should include consultation with the Youth Justice Board, when appropriate, about the availability of placements for looked after children and any changes in the availability of placements in local authority secure units resulting from the Youth Justice Board’s purchase of placements**  
   *Key Agencies:* Social Services / Youth Justice Board - **Section 4** |
| 17 | **Statutory agencies should engage with independent organisations in strategic planning development and delivery of services where this is likely to improve placement choice and stability and provide best value.**  
   *Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Health / Independent Organisations - **Section 4** |
| 18 | **Local authority and health services should consider how they might improve matching needs and services.**  
   *Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Housing / Health - **Section 5** |
| 19 | **When seeking to commission placements in specialist and other settings, authorities should ensure that the purpose of the setting is consistent with meeting the child’s needs**  
   *Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Housing / Health - **Section 5** |
| 20 | **Local authority and health services should provide access to a range of services that support and promote the stability of children in need, whether they live with their families or are looked after.**  
   *Key Agencies:* Social Services / Education / Housing / Health - **Section 5** |
| 21 | **To promote successful and stable family and residential placements, local authorities should ensure pre-placement preparation of children and carers, active management of placement processes, open communication and the identification of the need for support services.**  
   *Key Agency:* Social Services - **Section 5** |
| 22 | **Social services authorities need policies and guidelines for practitioners considering the capacity of relatives and friends of a child and their immediate family, to provide care for a child who is, or may need to be looked after, to ensure that any placement arrangements meet the requirements set out in regulations.**  
   *Key Agency:* Social Services - **Section 5** |
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<td>Local authorities should continue to develop and promote respite care services</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Social services should consider how they can best ensure the necessary capacity at management and practitioner level to recruit, retain and provide training development opportunities for foster carers to achieve an effective foster care service for looked after children in their area.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Local authorities should continue to develop, and where appropriate in collaboration with others, strategies to recruit and retain foster carers.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Local authorities should actively review the retention of foster carers through undertaking regular reviews; open communication with carers; involvement in decision-making and addressing individual and service wide carer support needs.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Local authorities should consider working collaboratively, and with others, where this will lead to improvements in foster care services.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Local authorities should have arrangements in place and work with other agencies to reduce delay in the adoption of children for whom adoption has been identified as being in their best interest.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services/CAFCASS/Family Courts - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Social services authorities should ensure that post adoption services are available to support adoptive families and promote stability for adopted children.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agency:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services/Education/ Health/ Voluntary Adoption Agencies, other independent agencies - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Social services authority placement strategies should include clear statements about the role of residential care in meeting the needs of local children and describe the arrangements for delivering good quality residential care when it is required.</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agencies:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Local authorities should consider their policies, procedures and planning arrangements for the placement of children in residential schools in conjunction with their placement strategy for looked after children</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agencies:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services/Education/Health - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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<td>Local authorities should develop a strategy in partnership with housing providers to ensure a range of accommodation options are available to meet the assessed needs of relevant children and other care leavers</td>
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<td><strong>Key Agencies:</strong></td>
<td>Social Services/ Housing/Social Landlords - <strong>Section 5</strong></td>
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SECTION ONE

SCOPE OF THE FRAMEWORK

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the strategic framework is to promote better planning, commissioning and delivery of placements for children who are looked after.

It seeks to:

- assist statutory agencies in the discharge of their duties to ensure the provision of a range of services to meet the needs of vulnerable children; and
- promote consistency across local placement strategies to assist in identifying overall need and link to wider strategic policy and funding.

All children need a sense of permanence and stability in their lives and to be able to form safe and secure attachments to the adults who look after them. Children who are looked after by local authorities have generally experienced significant disruption and insecurity prior to becoming looked after. Good stable placements can contribute to better outcomes for them and improve their life chances while inappropriate or ineffective placements are likely to result in poor outcomes.

The development of this strategic framework will take place alongside the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Strategy and in particular the recommendations about inter-agency working, services for looked after children and specialist residential placements in the health education and social care sectors. These include:

- Tier 4 and some Tier 3 services must be considered on an All Wales basis because of their very specialised nature and low volume. These services will be commissioned by Health Commission Wales (Specialist Services).
- The cost effectiveness of referring children and adolescents to residential services outside Wales should be reviewed and compared with the cost effectiveness of developing and funding a wider range of day and residential facilities closer to home within Wales.
- A mechanism is required to bridge the responsibilities of individual local authority areas to commission and monitor the quality of out-of-county educational and residential placements for children on an all Wales basis.

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4 Including the NHS funded components and those financed by local authorities e.g. special schools and specialist social care residential services
1.2 Principles

(a) The welfare and safety of children is the first consideration when providing services for them.

(b) Providing it is in their best interests children should grow up in the care of their families. They should receive universal services, including health and education, as well as services to meet specific needs, they should enjoy opportunities to participate in leisure and social activities within their communities.

(c) Planning and provision of services must promote equality and take account of diversity.


1.3 Stakeholders

The central stakeholders are:

- children in need who, for whatever reason, are looked after by the local authority
- children for whom becoming looked after is an immediate prospect
- care leavers

Other stakeholders include:

- the parents, brothers and sisters and extended families of children who are looked after
- foster carers, their children and extended families
- adoption applicants, their children and extended families

In addition there are significant groups of children who may not be looked after but who require and use similar services:

- children in residential schools
- children in hospitals
- children and young people who are cared for in adult care homes
- children in prison
- young people who, whilst not qualifying as care leavers are assessed as being in need and require support to live independently
Local authority social services have the lead responsibility for ensuring the availability, appropriateness and quality of placements for looked after children. Other agencies, in particular LEAs, the NHS, ELWa and the Youth Justice Board have commissioning responsibilities in relation to direct care or support services for children.

Some commissioners of services for children in need are also providers of services, for example local authorities, NHS. Others including independent organisations and registered social landlords provide services that statutory services commission or spot purchase.

Organisations that inspect, monitor and support services for children, including the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales and Area Child Protection Committees play a significant role in ensuring arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

1.4 Strategic Planning

The Strategic Framework for Improving Placement Choice and Stability is located within a broader policy and strategic planning context. These are described in greater detail in the Framework for Partnership.

Placement strategies should be developed as an integral part of the Children's Services Plan and are expected to demonstrate:

- an authority's corporate commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities towards children for whom it has parental responsibility and other children in need
- the development of integrated services for children in need across the organisational boundaries between agencies.

Successful planning of children's services requires effective links between children's services, community care, health (including mental health), substance misuse, education, community safety (in particular the youth justice plan) and joint planning aimed at addressing social inclusion and community regeneration.

1.5 Collaboration and Co-operation

The National Assembly document Flexibilities for Joint Working between Health and Local Government aims to improve services for users and carers by facilitating transfer of funds, pooled funds and the delegation of functions between local authority and health services that develop formal partnerships.

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1 Framework for Partnership - Welsh Assembly Government - July 2002
The framework encourages social services authorities to co-operate with one another in areas where this is likely to be of mutual benefit, for example:

- strategic planning
- commissioning placement information service
- adoption consortia
- foster care forums / consortia

Benefits of co-operation within and between authorities, and with their partner agencies are described in:

- the Report of the Examination Team on Child Care Procedures and Practice in North Wales
- Performance Management - A Strategy for Social Services in Wales
- The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy for Wales. This emphasises the need for agencies to work together to plan and commission effective mental health services for children and adolescents. It also indicates that an all Wales approach will be of benefit in planning and commissioning the most specialised services.
- The Victoria Climbie Inquiry

Integrated working would be enhanced by the inclusion of shared training and development opportunities for staff and carers. Relevant National Occupational Standards can be used to reflect core tasks in relation to the needs of children looked after.

1.6 Promotion of Welfare/Protection from Harm

Social services authorities must ensure that placement arrangements for looked after children safeguard and promote their welfare. They are responsible for ensuring that those whom they commission to provide services have a full understanding of their responsibilities; and are suitable, competent and equipped to undertake them. Safeguards for children include:

- good practice by practitioners and managers
- effective communication between the authority and parents of children it looks after
- child protection policies and procedures
- representation and complaints procedures

---

3 Performance Management - A Strategy for Social Services in Wales - Social Services Inspectorate for Wales - September 2001
• advocacy services
• office of the Children’s Commissioner
• implementation of national standards and codes of practice for foster care and adoption
• establishment of CSIW and introduction of national minimum standards for children’s homes, residential schools, foster care and adoption agencies and residential family centres
• establishment of the Care Council for Wales and anticipated codes of conduct for social care staff

1.7 Good Practice

Across Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom there are many examples of good practice where agencies and organisations are “getting it right” including examples of:

• corporate approaches to achieving better outcomes for children in need, including children looked after;
• co-operative working between local authorities and with their partners including arrangements that overcome barriers between organisations to develop services that improve outcomes for children in need;
• activity to promote children and families’ participation in decision making, service planning and review.

Researchers have an important role of informing and supporting strategic planning contributing to good practice through dissemination their own reports and directing to other sources

Information about practice development is disseminated in a range of ways including:

• Social Services Inspectorate for Wales Development Programme
• The Highlight series published by the Wales Office for Research and Development in Social Care (WORD) which disseminates findings from Wales based research projects.
• The Children First newsletter and related web-site and activities of the Welsh Assembly Government.
• The ‘good practice’ section on the Department of Health Quality Protects web-site.
• The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) whose remit to raise standards in social care and health services respectively throughout England and Wales includes reviewing research and practice and disseminating findings.
1.8 Workforce Issues

Recruitment, retention, and training and development of staff is essential to the development of quality services. The National Assembly is implementing the recommendations of the Workforce Task and Finish Group including preparation of a detailed implementation plan to ensure that the outcomes of its recommendations are monitored and evaluated.

The Care Council for Wales came into being on 1st October 2001 and has a key role in raising standards in the workforce. It will work with local authorities in delivering the elements of the human resource strategy described in their strategic plans; contribute to the development of national occupational standards; introduce codes of conduct and practice and establish the register of social care workers.

1.9 Implementation of the Framework

*Development Action Point*

The Assembly will establish an implementation and review group to:

- promote implementation of and review the strategic framework
- promote collaboration between services and local authorities
- advise on commissioning of development work and research
- contribute to dissemination of research findings, and examples of good practice and effective interventions in improving placement choice and stability
- contribute to the review of the framework document.

Social services authorities are expected, with their partner agencies to develop local placement strategies. The Welsh Assembly Government has established a national implementation group that includes representation from service users and across the range of statutory and independent agencies and professional disciplines. It is responsible for promoting and reviewing the implementation of the strategic framework. Terms of reference for the group and outline membership are to be found at Appendix 3.

The Welsh Assembly Government has consulted with children, young people and their families on the arrangements for implementation of the strategic framework. Further consultation will be undertaken on an ongoing basis.

The action points headed Development are priorities for the implementation group. Those described under Policy and Practice may also be considered by the implementation group. However these are primarily intended to highlight the issues that must be addressed by agencies at a local level if placement choice and stability and better outcomes for children are to be achieved.
SECTION TWO

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY PLACEMENTS

2.1 A Needs Led Service

A service should be provided because it is the most appropriate way to meet a child’s needs. The decision to provide a specific service should take account of the authority’s statutory responsibilities and duties, its strategic objectives and policies.

The range of services and their delivery must include the capacity to meet the diversity of children’s needs arising from disability, culture, language and religion; and to deal robustly and sensitively with issues of prejudice, inequality, non-inclusion.

2.2 Diversity, Equality and Equity

Development Action Point

Local authorities and partner agencies should undertake continual appraisal of the commissioning and provision of services to ensure that they promote diversity, provide equal opportunities and deliver equity

Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health

The range of services and their delivery must:

- ensure that diversity is recognised and celebrated
- include the capacity to meet children’s needs arising from disability, culture, language and religion
- compensate for inequalities in opportunity and
- deal robustly and sensitively with issues of prejudice, inequality, non-inclusion.

2.3 Assessment, Care Planning Intervention and Review for individual children

Development Action Point

Local authorities and health services should work together to establish common criteria to assist them in identifying need, determining priorities, allocating resources and intervening effectively where individual children are recognised as in need

Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health
Policy and Practice Action Point

Social services authorities are responsible for co-ordinating in partnership with education, health services and partner agencies in the independent sector, an integrated approach to assessment, care planning and review for individual children who are looked after.

Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health/Independent sector

Policy and Practice Action Point

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that:

- each looked after child has a current care plan to meet their needs that is implemented effectively and reviewed as required
- looked after children have stable placements that meet their needs

Key Agency: Social Services

Policy and Practice Action Point

Social Services should ensure that:

- protocols are agreed with health, education and partner agencies in the independent sector, to facilitate the early identification of children's needs
- the availability of services to meet those needs

Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health

Social services authorities are responsible for co-ordinating an integrated approach to assessment, care planning, intervention and review for each looked after child and are expected to use the "Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families" and the "Looking After Children" (LAC) system. The introduction of the Integrated Children's System will combine these into a single comprehensive set of procedures and tools.

Assessment, care planning, intervention and review must take account of the child's:

- health needs and incorporate information from health assessments carried out at the time of placement and at regular prescribed intervals.
• education needs - guidance to local education authorities requires that each child who is looked after is assessed and the subject of a personal education plan. Children with special education needs will be the subject of a statutory assessment and may have a statement.

• needs on leaving care and preparing to live independently.

In addition social services need to ensure independent agencies and Youth Offending Teams are appropriately engaged in assessing, and planning to meet, the needs of looked after children. Youth Offending Teams use Asset to assess young offenders.

Social services authorities should ensure that policies and protocols are in place with other agencies to facilitate the exchange of information in accordance with good practice and requirements set out in legislation.

All agencies should prioritise the establishment of an integrated approach to assessment, planning, intervention and review for individual children which will help to ensure:

• a timely response to need that is more likely to achieve positive outcomes for children and should help avoid the adverse effects of delay in children receiving appropriate services
• the child’s needs are met with safeguards to promote their welfare;
• the child’s care plan is reviewed when necessary and in accordance with requirements set out in regulations to ensure it is being effectively implemented and continues to meet the needs of the child
• information about the needs of the child can be included in aggregated information about children's needs, managers planning and developing services
• specialist services are seen as potential resources to meet children’s needs on a planned basis rather than options of “last resort” when others are considered to have failed.

Early identification of children’s needs requires systematic arrangements for integrated assessments and information sharing at the earliest possible point in the child’s life. It is important that children receive the appropriate multi-agency services without undue delay. The purpose of early identification is to ensure that necessary services can be planned and commissioned. Where more than one agency is involved, the earlier joint planning and commissioning take place the more likely it is that the right services will be provided in the most cost effective way.

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8 Guidance for Local Education Authorities on the Education of Looked After Children - National Assembly for Wales 2001
10 ASSET - Young Offender Assessment Profile - Youth Justice Board 2000
Professionals must ensure that their decision-making processes are sufficiently flexible, for example while professionals should generally adopt the least intrusive approach in their work with families this should not inhibit them from intervening when necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

2.4 Permanence

*Policy and Practice Action Point*

Permanence is an important factor in safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare and this should be reflected in care, service and strategic planning.

*Key Agency: Social Services*

Children need a sense of security, continuity and permanence for them to be able to develop emotional attachments and relationships that are essential to their emotional and social development. Commitment to achieving permanence for children should be a key principle in policies and practice seeking to promote children’s welfare.

2.5 Placement Stability

*Policy and Practice Action Point*

Placement stability is a service objective that contributes to safeguarding and promoting the children’s welfare and development.

*Key Agency: Social Services*

Placement stability can make a significant contribution to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Whilst it must be a core aim of responsible authorities this does not remove the responsibility of local authorities to make changes in the arrangements for a child’s care where this is necessary to safeguard and promote their interests.

2.6 Corporate Parenting

*Policy and Practice Action Point*

Local authorities must ensure that their elected members and officers understand and implement the authority’s corporate responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children that they look after.

*Key Agencies: Local Authority*
Local authorities have duties and responsibilities in respect of all children whom they look after and parental responsibility for those who are the subject of care orders. They should:

- ensure that policy development, planning and service design across the council’s activities takes account of the needs and aspirations of looked after children
- allocate resources and provide services to meet children’s needs and ensure good outcomes for them
- co-ordinate the activity of the authority, in particular social services, education and housing
- work in partnership with health services to provide services that ease the effects of disadvantage and promote social inclusion
- monitor outcomes for children

Whilst elected members, managers and staff have different tasks and levels of responsibility, all must take an active part in ensuring the best possible care and opportunities are available for looked after children. Corporate parenting responsibilities will only be delivered when senior managers agree that it is a priority and there is clear political commitment and leadership.

The concept of the responsibilities of corporate parenting extends beyond the local authority and includes health agencies that also have a duty to assist in the provision of services to children in need and those who are looked after.

2.7 Joint Working

Policy and Practice Action Point

The health and education needs of children looked after must be met on the basis of social services authorities, health and education services working together, and in partnership with independent agencies to:

- co-ordinate assessments and care planning to meet the needs of individual children
- strategically plan and commission services to meet the needs of looked after children in their area

Key Agencies: Social Services /Education/Health
Local authorities and health services should:

- Continue to develop, and improve integrated working across social, health and education services

**Key Agencies:** Social Services/Education/Health

Joint working requires partners to contribute managerial capacity and commitment. Local authority and health services should work together with agencies in the independent sector to provide a range of services for children in need including services for looked after children, child protection services, services for disabled children, child and adolescent mental health and youth justice services.

Authorities have used additional funding available through the Children First programme to fund inter-agency initiatives and also to fund posts from health and education disciplines.

The new flexibility’s guidance\(^1\) gives further opportunities for statutory agencies to work together to plan and provide services. Future improvement in services for looked after children needs to build on the existing commitment to joint working and to the development of integrated services.

Children who become looked after by local authorities have often experienced inadequate care and lack of attention to their physical and mental health and well being. Their education in many cases will have been disrupted and characterised by under-achievement and disaffection. Achieving equality in health and educational outcomes for looked after children requires agencies to co-ordinate assessments and plan jointly, both in respect of individual children and strategically, to ensure services are appropriately focused and their performance monitored\(^2\). It is important that education authorities and schools are involved in the planning processes at all levels for children in need. The life-chances of looked after children are improved through raising educational outcomes. Continuity of education is a critical factor in improving placement stability and education has key role in developing children's confidence and capacity for self-advocacy.

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\(^1\) Health Act 1999 - Flexibility’s for Joint Working between Health and Local Government - Guidance Document - National Assembly for Wales 2000

\(^2\) Guidance on the Education of Children Looked After by Local Authorities - National Assembly for Wales Circular 2/2001 and Guidance
The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy\textsuperscript{13} recognises that the moves children looked after experience often means that their access to primary health care services might be lost or the continuity of care and education broken. It accepts the view that there is an urgent need to improve the capability of services to track the placements of children looked after and to better ensure that their needs are met.
SECTION THREE

PLANNING AND PLACEMENT STRATEGIES

3.1 Strategic Planning

**Development Action Point**

Local authority and health services should work together to develop agreed definitions and methodologies for the collection, aggregation, comparison and interpretation of data for use in strategically planning to meet the needs of children who are looked after and likely to become looked after.

*Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health*

**Policy and Practice Action Point**

Local authority and health services should plan to commission services that meet children's needs as close as possible to the children's home communities.

*Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health*

**Policy and Practice Action Point**

Agencies providing services for children and their families should have policies and procedures that enable them to contribute to planning and evaluating services and promote equality.

*Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health/Independent providers*

Social services authorities are responsible for producing a Children's Services Plan, developed in partnership with other agencies, to ensure an adequate range of services are available for children in need. The plan should incorporate a comprehensive placement commissioning strategy to meet the needs of children they look after.

The joint planning and commissioning of services requires agencies to agree on local needs and priorities that they can tackle together. The development of a common profile of local needs will inform strategic planning, policy development and allocation of resources by agencies. The profile will require analysis of a range of socio-economic data including relevant statistics and aggregated information from assessments of the needs of individual children.

Planning between agencies will become more effective with the development and use between agencies of agreed:
Co-operation between agencies and authorities brings benefits from access to increased planning capacity and a broader population base. This leads to aggregated information about assessed needs to inform planning and commissioning of services. This is highlighted in:

- The Report of the Examination Team on Child Care Procedures and Practice in North Wales
- Social Services Guidance on Planning - National Assembly for Wales 2000

Children First programme guidance requires local authorities to involve children and their families in planning services. The Children’s Services Plan should describe the arrangements for seeking their views and authorities should commission research from time to time to evaluate their effectiveness.

Services for children in need should enable children to remain with their families, stay in familiar communities, stay in the same school where possible and use local services unless it is necessary to make other arrangements in order to safeguard and promote their welfare or ensure the protection of others.

There are four identifiable phases to the provision of services to meet individual needs and make best use of resources

1. Assessing and profiling need
2. Matching needs, services and resources
3. Delivering effective services
4. Evaluation and review

These phases occur in assessment and care planning for individual children and similar phases can be identified in strategic planning.
3.2 Local Placement Strategies

**Development Action Point**

Social services authorities should develop comprehensive placement strategies that address key elements of defining need, demand, allocation of resources, commissioning and managing placements.

*Key Agency: Social Services*

**Policy and Practice Action Point**

- Social services authorities must ensure that placement strategies include the mechanisms agreed with education and health services for accessing and financing specialist and intensive placements for children with complex needs.
- Placement strategies must address specific needs including those of disabled children and other groups referred to in this document.

*Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health*

Social services authorities should develop placement strategies that:

(a) establish the provision of placements for children looked after in the wider context of children’s services and promote the need for each child’s placement to be properly planned and supported to meet their needs.

(b) promote permanence for children with their birth or adoptive families, other than where this does not meet their needs, including support for families of children with disabilities and chronic illness

(c) include information about:

- the roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies, including social, education and health services and the youth offending team, and independent agencies
- agreed inter-agency protocols relevant to the strategy.
- the local profile of need and demand for services, including information about unmet need
- arrangements for planning, providing, commissioning and evaluation and review of services
- the authority’s arrangements to meet children’s needs that require the use of specialist, probably expensive provision and which occurs too infrequently for expenditure to be anticipated on an annual basis
• placement arrangements for children with specific needs and how this compares with 
information about placement arrangements for the overall population of looked after 
children
• the services provided and commissioned to meet needs and take account of the 
wishes of children and their families including:
  - adoption services, including post adoption services
  - the balance, actual and desired, between kinship placements, foster care and 
residential services
  - the balance between direct service provision, and services commissioned and spot 
purchased from external agencies
  - the balance between use of local and distant placements
  - the use of specialist placements
  - support services to meet the needs of children and avoid them becoming looked 
after unnecessarily
  - support services to meet the needs of children and their carers and promote 
placement stability
(d) reflect and describe:
• how local authority and other agencies are working together to ensure an adequate 
range of placements and support services are available to meet the needs of children 
who need to be looked after
• The links between the strategy and the local and national arrangements to provide 
services for young offenders
• any collaborative arrangements, between the social services authority and others with 
the same responsibilities, to improve placement choice and stability.
(e) address:
• the local authority’s duties and responsibilities in respect of looked after children 
including the role of elected members and the authority’s functions and 
responsibilities as an education and housing authority
• all levels of need, including those that are exceptionally complex and may occur 
infrequently and irregularly in the local area
• the need to achieve a balanced range of services that take account of specific needs 
and how they should be met, including those of disabled children, Welsh 
speaking/bilingual children, children from minority ethnic groups and asylum seekers
• issues of gender and sexuality in the provision of placements
• arrangements for the provision of emergency, respite, specialist and permanent care
• the need for siblings to be placed together where appropriate whilst ensuring that placement arrangements meet their individual needs and safeguard and promote their welfare.
• management of fluctuations in level of demand
• arrangements for provision of services to support children and their carers;
• arrangements for the return of children, where this is part of their care plan, who were placed outside of their communities because a placement was not available
• arrangements for provision of accommodation to care leavers

Children with complex needs are looked after in placements across the range of provision. They may be receiving services on a shared care basis, temporary or more permanent basis. Development of specialist placements and services to support them should be projected in strategic planning between agencies, making use of aggregated information about levels of need.

3.3 Disabled Children

Planning and commissioning of services for disabled children should recognise that they are children first, with needs that require specific attention.

When developing provision and drawing up care plans for children who have needs arising from physical disability, learning difficulties, mental health or emotional/behavioural difficulties, a primary consideration should be that services are usually best provided in the same schools, health centres, hospitals and leisure facilities as other children from their communities.

Effective support to many families in looking after their disabled children is provided through a series of short (respite) placements in residential or foster care settings. Some disabled children are placed in specialist or intensive placements. These can include foster care, residential social care, health or educational settings. Children, their carers and statutory authorities need to be clear about the legal basis for these arrangements and how the child's welfare is being safeguarded and promoted.

The arrangements for children with disabilities has to take account of how their health and education needs can be best met whilst ensuring that primary consideration is given to maintaining them with their families.

14 Responsibilities under the SEN and Disability Act (2001), The SEN Code of Practice (2002) and DRC Codes of Practice (2001)
All looked after children require support in making transitions, particularly to adulthood. This is particularly important for disabled children. Children, their families and local authority and health services for children and adults, should be involved in planning for any transition from an early stage.

3.4 Specialist and Intensive Placements

**Development Action Points**

The Welsh Assembly Government will commission work to help authorities identify the level of need for specialist placements across Wales

*Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health*

When considering the development of specialist and intensive placements this strategic framework will be joined with the implementation of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy, "Everybody’s Business", recommendations in relation to Tier 4 services.

Good practice and effective use of resources means that local authorities should seek to meet children’s needs locally. For many children this might mean in placements with relatives or foster carers, although for some placement in a residential setting is their preferred option.

Some children’s welfare will be best promoted by placement in specialist settings with access to services that are able to support them and their carers. Such placements may be available in foster care, children’s homes, residential schools, or health settings. Placement strategies should address the level of need for this type of placement and how it will be met.

Local authority and health services may develop or commission specialist placements services or purchase places in existing provision. Options for developing such provision locally include:

- developing foster care and residential placements with access to support services for children and carers
- joint commissioning of integrated services with health and/or education
- service level or joint user agreements with neighbouring authorities
- commissioning, as a single agency or jointly, services from independent agencies
- contracting with independent agencies to block or spot purchase placements.

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15 Very specialised interventions and care including specialised regional clinics, inpatient psychiatric services, residential schools and very specialised residential care.
Local authority and health services need to take account of the limited availability of specialist placements for children with complex social and mental health needs. CAMHS Tier 4 and some Tier 3 services must be considered on an all-Wales basis, because of their very specialised nature and low volume. These services will be commissioned by Health Commission Wales (Specialist Services).

Local authority secure units (LASUs) provide a specific type of specialist service. The availability of such accommodation for looked after children is limited and finely balanced against demand. This reflects a desire to avoid the risk associated with over-provision and the relatively high cost of such accommodation.

Placement strategies should include information about how local authority and health services are addressing the need for placements for children whose behaviour places themselves and/or others at risk. Such placements must provide a secure, child centred care environment that meets their general health, social care and education needs. While the number of children in such circumstances is low they are significant in terms of the immediacy and complexity of their needs.

The approach by local authorities, both individually and jointly, to improving choice and access to specialist/intensive placements for children from Wales should include:

- sharing information about their projected needs for specialist/intensive placements on a national and regional basis;
- reviewing the capacity of current provision to meet the needs of children in Wales; and developing policies, protocols and procedures between local agencies and with other authorities for accessing and commissioning specialist/intensive placements.

Local authorities should always consider whether expensive specialist placements at a distance from their homes and communities are the most appropriate alternative to local high support arrangements and whether the cost is justified in terms of the added value and more effectively meeting children's needs.

### 3.5 Ensuring Placements Meet Children’s Needs

**Policy and Practice Action Points**

Local authority and health services must ensure when placing children outside of their area that the placement child’s care, education, health and cultural needs can be met in the area where the placement is located.

*Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Health*
The promotion of placement arrangements that meet children’s needs requires:

- compliance with regulations, guidance and good practice by placing authorities and provider organisations
- local authorities, health organisations, independent organisations and individuals in the areas where placements are made to report any concerns about the adequacy of arrangements to the placing authority
- regulation and inspection processes to include consideration of whether providers have made adequate arrangements to ensure the health and education needs of children placed with them can be met.

*Key Agencies:* Social Services/Education/Health/Care Standards Inspectorate Wales

Children who become looked after often experience difficulties in accessing the education and specialist health services they need. These difficulties increase significantly for children who are placed outside of their home local authority area. Local authorities have a duty when making arrangements to place children, whether within or beyond their administrative boundaries, to consult the relevant education and health services to ensure that services required to meet the child’s needs are available in the area of the placement or can be otherwise obtained and delivered. When this duty is not fulfilled it can place considerable pressures on the child and their carers, and on services in the locality where the child is placed.

Commissioners and providers of services are both responsible for ensuring that placements can meet the children’s welfare, health and education needs. Local authorities making placements have a duty to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place at the time of the placement or, if this is not possible, as soon as reasonably practical. The implementation of the Care Standards Act 2000 requires children’s homes and fostering agencies to promote the educational attainment and to promote and protect the health of the children in placement.
SECTION FOUR

COMMISSIONING SERVICES

4.1 Commissioning Strategy

Policy and Practice Action Point

Agencies responsible for commissioning services must ensure that they explore all available options for their delivery, and consider their potential to deliver better outcomes for children and make optimum use of resources.

Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health

Commissioning and purchasing arrangements must ensure that services meet children’s needs and achieve good standards of care. Services should focus on achieving positive outcomes for the child and provide value for money. They must be consistent with the commissioning agency’s statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare. The arrangements should include meeting the child’s health and education needs. Commissioning arrangements, including those for in house services, should be set out in the local placement strategy. Local authorities should determine the needs of their population, map local social care/children’s services and their own provision and develop plans to commission services to meet local needs and achieve desired outcomes.

It may not for practical and economic reasons be possible to make provision for all children at single local authority level. Local authorities should in co-operation with one another and other agencies, map need and their capacity to meet it within the context of the wider market in children’s services.

Local authorities should consider how to involve independent providers in the development of service specifications. Services are likely to produce better outcomes if the personnel most directly involved in delivering them are engaged in their development. No single organisation or professional group has the monopoly of skills, resources, commitment or ideas for the delivery of services to children.

Local authorities must establish the gross cost of their services relative to those of independent providers in order to be in a position to commission services on a best value basis and for providers to develop and deliver services on an equitable basis.
4.2 Contracting for Quality

**Development Action Point**

Local authority and health services need to ensure that they allocate sufficient resources to develop effective planning, commissioning and contracting arrangements, including monitoring contract compliance, to achieve required standards of care, positive outcomes for children, and best value.

*Key Agencies*: Social Services / Education / Health

There is potential for further development in the collaborative commissioning and purchase of placements through contracts with other agencies by local authorities and LHBs. Local authorities and LHBs should work individually and together to develop skills, tools and capacity to ensure that contracts help commissioners/purchasers and providers to provide high quality outcomes for children through value for money services.

Local authorities should ensure that contracts with independent providers specify the services required, the desired outcomes and monitor compliance with the contract. Effective placement strategies are likely to reduce reliance on spot purchasing.

Commissioners of services should ensure that account is taken of all the available information about providers and their services. In particular reference should be made to the reports prepared by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales, Estyn and, where appropriate, other relevant inspectorates. References from previous and existing organisations using the services should also be taken up. All placements should be seen by the commissioning agency in advance of children being placed and arrangements made for introduction/matching and choice for children and young people wherever feasible.

4.3 Co-operation between Local Authorities

**Development Action Point**

Local authorities should co-operate with each other when this is likely to enable them to improve services and/or achieve better use of resources.

*Key Agency*: Social Services
Development Action Point

Local authorities should consider investing in a national/regional placement information advisory service(s) to assist them in finding placements for individual children and strategic planning

Key Agency: Social Services

The North Wales Examination Team was clear in its report that the unitary authorities would be unable to achieve an adequate range of placement provision to meet the needs of all their looked after children unless they collaborated with one another. Subsequent experience has borne out this view. Joint arrangements that were in place between authorities when local government re-organised have declined. However, there is evidence of interest in new initiatives between authorities with co-operation based on geographical proximity and/or common interest. In some instances co-operative initiatives between authorities involves other parties including independent providers who might also deliver the service.

Co-operation between authorities requires commitment of resources to establish and maintain arrangements. This investment has to be balanced against the outcomes, which might include the provision of an otherwise unavailable service, better quality services that improve the outcomes for children or economies of scale.

There may be scope for co-operation between authorities to develop a national or regional placement information advisory service(s). Such a service might undertake

- maintenance of information about the availability of placements
- monitoring and reporting on the quality and effectiveness of placements
- development of common documentation and streamlined administrative systems between authorities and partner agencies, including the independent sector
- work on negotiating fee structures and service standards

Local authorities will need to consider the financial implications when developing the specification for a network/agency.

The development of commissioning consortia can be beneficial to purchasers and providers and enable the development of services with greater confidence that they will meet local needs. Local authorities need to develop their capacity to work together, and with the independent sector, on this.
4.4 Local Authority and Health Services - Co-operative Arrangements

**Development Action Point**

Health and local authority services should explore the potential for developing joint planning and commissioning of specialist placements and support Services.

*Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health*

**Policy and Practice Action Point**

Local authorities and health services should consider whether they might appropriately seek to access the Flexibilities Special Grant to assist them in developing formal partnerships to develop improved services.

*Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health*

The majority of joint commissioning/purchasing arrangements between local authority and health services for children looked after concern placements for individual children in specialist settings. Social services, local education authorities and health services often co-operate on a tripartite or bipartite basis to jointly plan how best to meet the child’s needs and share costs.

[Joint commissioning and delivery of services occurs less frequently. The Health Act 1999 and associated guidance “Flexibilities for Joint Working between Health and Local Government” aims to improve services for users and carers, through enhanced arrangements for the transfer of funds, pooled funds and the delegation of functions (lead commissioning and integrated provision). It reduces significantly administrative barriers to the development of interagency co-operation between local authorities and the NHS].

[The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy for Wales - Everybody’s Business - includes as a priority for action the development of co-ordinated planning and the delivery of a greater diversity of local service responses through the shared efforts of agencies from all sectors working together. A national CAMHS strategy implementation group has been established. There are well-established links between the work of this group and the implementation of this strategic framework. The strategy includes a number of recommendations in respect of services for looked after children and the implementation of these will take place alongside and in some cases jointly with actions arising from the strategic framework.]

The strategy recognises that the most specialised services will require an all Wales approach to planning and commissioning. Very specialised services (CAMHS Tier 4), that may not need to be available in each local authority area but to which the local specialist CAMHS require
predictable access, include very specialised clinics that are only supportable on a regional or national basis; inpatient psychiatric services for children and adolescents; residential special schools; and very specialised residential social care.

The preventative and therapeutic contributions to CAMHS tiers 1-3 are critical to the provision of placement stability, establishing permanent attachments and better outcomes for children who are looked after. Local authorities and local health boards need to work together to ensure the delivery of responsive, targeted services that effectively prevent the need for more intensive provision. Links with mental health services for adults must be strengthened to ensure better transitional arrangements for young adults and to develop an integrated approach to improving the lives of children and young people by addressing the mental health needs of their parents and carers.

4.5 Youth Justice

**Development Action Point**

Policy development, in respect of the availability of secure accommodation placements for looked after children should include consultation with the Youth Justice Board and take account of any changes in the availability of placements in local authority secure units, resulting from the Youth Justice Board’s purchase of placements.

*Key Agencies:* Welsh Assembly Government/Local Authorities/Health/Youth Justice Board

**Practice and Policy Action Point**

The development of placement strategies should include consultation with the Youth Justice Board, when appropriate, about the availability of placements for looked after children and any changes in the availability of placements in local authority secure units, resulting from the Youth Justice Board’s purchase of placements.

*Key Agencies:* Social Services/Youth Justice Board

The Youth Justice Board is responsible for commissioning and facilitating the placement of young people remanded to secure accommodation or custody, made the subject of secure training orders or sentenced to youth custody. Its strategic intentions include better meeting the needs of young women and vulnerable 15 and 16 year-old boys. The Youth Justice Board requirement for secure accommodation placements for young people on remand or subject to detention and training orders may reduce choice and flexibility for those seeking placements to meet the needs of looked after children.
Youth offending teams (YOTs) directly provide and commission services for young offenders, including placements in local children’s homes and with specialist foster carers. There is significant cross-over between the YOT’s responsibilities to address risk factors associated with offending and meeting the offender’s needs for a stable nurturing home environment.

The issues of access to the secure estate, local placements for young offenders, and that of the broader impact on service availability of national youth justice policies and strategies need continued attention in discussions between the YJB, the local YOT steering groups, those with responsibility for or an interest in services for looked after children and the range of service providers.

4.6 Independent Organisations

**Policy and Practice Action Point**

Statutory agencies should engage with independent organisations in strategic planning development and delivery of services where this is likely to improve placement choice and stability and provide best value.

*Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health / Independent Organisations*

Independent providers contribute to:

- service innovation, the promotion of good practice and action research
- development of specialist services for children with complex needs
- development of flexible responses to meet unmet needs
- early and preventative interventions
- supporting community based solutions to local needs
- facilitating access to fund raising through charitable contributions and private finance
- a business approach to service delivery
- a national and UK perspective and on practice and research

In addition, their independence from political constraints means they are able to develop a campaigning role on some issues.

It is recognised that a more integrated purchaser/provider relationship between local authority children’s services and the independent sector presents challenges in terms of cultural change and the development of new ways of managing and administrating services. The contribution of independent agencies needs to be mapped and targeted more strategically with planning taking place across statutory and independent agencies.
4.7 Welsh Assembly Government

The Children Act 1989 section 82(5) provides for the Secretary of State, devolved to the National Assembly through the devolved powers inherent in the Government of Wales Act 1998, to provide for the provision, equipment and maintenance of homes for the accommodation of children who are in need of particular facilities and services which:

(a) are or will be provided in those homes; and

(b) in the opinion of the Secretary of State (Welsh Assembly Government), are unlikely to be readily available in children's homes.

The National Assembly has similar powers to fund capital developments in education under Education Act 1996 section 10 and in health through the devolved powers inherent in the Government of Wales Act 1998.
SECTION FIVE

DELIVERING SERVICES

5.1 Effective interventions

Effective interventions safeguard and promote the welfare of children before, during and after they are looked after. The following elements are essential to interventions which seek to effect better outcomes for children:

- Involvement of children and young people, individually and collectively in the development of services
- Partnership with children, families and between and within agencies.
- Integrated comprehensive assessment and review of children’s needs.
- Skilled staff, competent in working and communicating with children, young people and their families, who are able to provide continuity of care.
- Effective management and supervision of staff
- Opportunities for staff to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that enhance the contribution they make to the service and children’s lives.
- Effective planning at strategic and individual level to develop responsive solutions and avoid reactive action.
- Multi-agency working - at individual, service management and strategic levels.
- A holistic balanced approach to addressing welfare, education and health needs.
- Availability of identified resources including placement and support services.

Planning for children should be proactive and seek to anticipate difficulties and needs for support. Planning in response to a crisis can induce a sense of failure both for children and for carers. Services should offer a flexible ‘menu’ of support that can be accessed when required.

Promoting and maintaining contact between children, their families and their communities is a critical element in improving outcomes for children. Local placements increase the likelihood and quality of the family contact, continuity of education and health care and the protective oversight of professionals exercising corporate parenting responsibilities.
Services aimed at early intervention and prevention, to reduce the need to look after children, must have the capacity for intensive sustained intervention based on clear aims and on the achievement of measurable outcomes.

Advocacy and other advice and support services can help to resolve issues that may put placements in jeopardy.

All services should be delivered on the basis of assessed individual need and intervention in the context of a multi-agency plan

5.2 Matching Individual Needs and Services

**Development Action Point**

Models for managing demand and allocation of resources and services should be explored and developed

*Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health*

**Policy and Practice Action Points**

1. Local authority and health services should consider how they might improve the matching of needs and services.

   *Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Housing/Health*

2. When seeking to commission placements in specialist and other settings authorities should ensure that the purpose of the setting is consistent with meeting the child’s needs.

   *Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Housing/Health*

3. Local authority and health services should provide access to a range of services that support and promote the stability of children in need whether they live with their families or are looked after.

   *Key Agencies: Social Services/Education/Housing/Health*

Findings from inspections, joint reviews, research and audits indicate there is scope for children’s services to develop the application of criteria used to match needs and services within and across authorities. Published information about services that are available to meet needs increases awareness among services users, and staff of other agencies, about what social services are able to offer and the circumstances in which services are likely to be provided.
Some authorities have developed formally managed arrangements for matching children and services. These arrangements should improve linking of needs and services; provide access to a broader range of potential services; and aid the development of comprehensive packages with greater likelihood of effecting positive and lasting change for children and their families than a series of single service interventions. There is also potential for greater consistency in ensuring resources are allocated to those in greatest need.

A project-based approach to improving placement choice and stability could help deliver a changing or re-focussing agenda. Arrangements should:

- involve key agencies - health, education, housing etc;
- raise standards of assessment and planning by all partners;
- aim to reduce inappropriate and unplanned placements;
- provide support to children and families when they cease to be looked after, including identifying resources and services in the care plan/review as necessary;
- monitor needs, services and outcomes; and contribute to the identification of trends and evaluation of performance.

Arrangements for a project-based approach should be subject to regular and rigorous review to ensure that they support best practice and optimise the use available resources.

The principles and processes of commissioning services are outlined in Section Four. From time to time children with high levels of need will require urgent provision that has not been pre-commissioned. Local authorities describe difficulties in making timely placements in these circumstances. The establishment of a placement service will assist in this area. Commissioners need clear and reliable information about the quality and profile of services offered by individual providers so that key information about the child may be linked to the statement of purpose of the residential home or focus of the foster care service. Service providers require:

- high quality assessments of the child’s needs;
- clarity about the purpose of the placement being sought;
- the desired outcomes for the child; and
- the specifications of the service to be provided.

When making emergency placements the child’s continued educational and health needs should be very carefully considered and arrangements made before placement or as soon as possible thereafter.
5.3 Supporting Children in the Community

Most children living with their families will have access to universal services. Children in need require an additional range of services that enhance or encourage take up, facilitate access, or provide compensatory alternatives to universal services. In addition, they require specific services that address their needs through direct work with the child and family. These may include a mix ranging through the provision of parenting guidance and day care services to a series of short break placements. Services for children with high levels of need related to disability or long term limiting illness may require considerable health support and should be planned on an inter agency basis.

5.3.1 Communities as Resources

Communities are a significant potential resource. They are sources of volunteers, carers, workforce and goodwill, but require investment and encouragement if the potential is to be realised.

Children and young people should be encouraged to design solutions to the problems and challenges that they encounter in their communities and contribute to its capacity to meet the needs of children and young people.

Services to meet the needs of black and ethnic minority children and asylum seeking families are often enhanced by local knowledge and networks, supported by the provision of skilled translation and interpreting services and information sharing between service users and providers about culture and practice.

When developing community based capacity and accessing it to address individual children's needs, local authorities must ensure that primary consideration is given to promoting and safeguarding the child’s welfare.

5.3.2 Child Care/Early Years Education

High quality early years childcare and education are elements that improve outcomes for children who are, or might become in need. In addition to immediate universal benefits for children - safe-care, play and stimulation, socialisation - they contribute to stability and permanence for children by providing:

- compensatory care for children in need
- respite and support for parents
5.3.3 Integrated Programmes

The inter-relationship between social deprivation, parental ill-health, parenting problems and children's needs reinforce the importance of a holistic approach to families' needs and for agencies to work together to provide a range of services. Local agencies need to ensure that the strategic aims and operational implications of integrated programmes are consistent with the individual agencies meeting their responsibilities.

Strategic funding schemes like Cymorth (formerly Sure Start and the Children and Youth Partnership Fund), Youth Access (National Assembly) and On Track (Home Office) have provided local authorities and health authorities with opportunities to target packages of integrated services on the areas of highest levels of need.

This has led to the introduction of innovative practice in terms of both planning and providing services and the Children and Youth partnership planning arrangements are designed to support and strengthen inter agency planning for children and young people.

5.3.4 Family Centres

The Children Act 1989\(^\text{16}\) requires local authorities to provide family centres to meet local need. The development of family centres has varied across England and Wales in terms of population coverage and range of service provision and research (consultation with the professionals that refer and families that use them) has indicated that the services they provide are generally welcomed and often highly regarded.

5.3.5 Support and Advice

Local authorities are developing services that provide intensive support to families of looked after children who are returning home as well as a rapid response to assessing and planning to meet the needs of children and their families where children appear at risk of becoming looked after. The services are designed to promote stability and permanence for children within their families where this is consistent with safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Support and mentoring services are provided through a range of support services including family centres, day care and foster care. Examples include parenting education, special educational needs parent partnership schemes, and supportive home-based services. The growth of local Home Start schemes reflects an acknowledgement that practical mentoring is an effective service that families want.

\(^{16}\) Children Act 1989 Schedule 2 para 9
5.3.6 Family Group Conferences

The purpose of Family Group Conferences (FGC) is to engage the wider family group in making plans and decisions about changes that will improve the lives of their children. Several authorities are developing the use of FGCs to promote stability for children within their families. The conference seeks to use the expertise of the family, its networks and workers who are involved with the family. The service is therefore based on empowering children and families.

5.4 Achieving Successful Placements

Policy and Practice Action Point

To promote successful and stable family and residential placements, local authorities should ensure pre-placement preparation of children and carers, active management of placement processes, open communication and the identification of the need for support services.

Key Agency: Social Services

The following elements have been identified as having a measurable impact on the stability of placements:

- Assessment - A comprehensive assessment of a child’s needs prior to making a placement increases the potential for a good match between needs, the carer / staff skills and the capacity of the placement to meet the needs and respond to the demands to be placed upon it - including access to support services (in particular health and education).

- Information - full information about the children, arrangements for contact, the projected duration of the placement and expectations of the carers means that potential carers can contribute to the matching process and placement planning.

- Management - Placements benefit from contingency planning, active monitoring and early responses to potential causes of stress for children and carers.

- Support - Children will often need specialised support; carers / staff will need practical help, respite and emotional support

- Reflection - Where placements fail to meet needs or are disrupted, investing time in identifying the reasons can reduce the likelihood of further failure
Placing authorities should avoid unrealistic expectations of the outcomes for children placed in residential care or with families. Most children will have complex needs and many will have suffered trauma. Consideration of alternatives, for example other more specialist placements, might be made at an earlier stage for some children. Criteria for the provision of foster care placements should be specified with clear expectations in terms of linking children’s needs and skills/capacity of carers. Care should be taken to establish before placement that the purpose and functions, specifications and current capacity of a residential unit are consistent with meeting a child’s assessed needs.

5.5 Shared Care

5.5.1 Placements with Family and Friends

Policy and Practice Action Point

Social services authorities need policies and guidelines for practitioners considering the capacity of relatives and friends of a child, and their immediate family to provide care for a child who is or may need to be looked after to ensure that any placement arrangements meet the requirements set out in regulations.

Key Agency: Social Services

Local authorities should consider whether a child’s welfare would be best promoted by being cared for by members of their family who are not their parents, or by friends rather than in foster or residential care. Particular consideration should be given to:

- the quality of relationships between the child, their immediate and extended family and friends
- the needs of family members / friends for support in caring for children on this basis
- establishing a clear understanding between the family, carers and local authority about the regulatory framework of the placement, including for example whether it is a private fostering arrangement

Social services authorities should have clear policies in respect of approval (in particular meeting National Minimum Standards), support, payment and expectations of relatives and friends who are approved as foster carers for a specific looked after child or children.
5.5.2 Respite and Support Care

Policy and Practice Action Point

Local authorities should continue to develop and promote respite care services.

*Key Agency:* Social Services

Respite care for children with disabilities is a well-established service and is provided through a series of short placements, residential or foster care. The need to expand the number, range and capacity of these placements is recognised.

Foster carers can offer support to children and their families to supplement an absent or inadequate extended family network. Support care is a valuable element in preventative work - providing support for families and helping sustain children and young people in their own families.

The statutory duties in terms of placement arrangements and approval/registration and inspection of settings apply to "respite" and support care.

5.6 Foster Care

Development Action Point

The Welsh Assembly Government will commission a review of the purpose, effectiveness, development and management of foster care services in Wales.

*Key Agencies:* National Assembly / Social Services / Independent Fostering Agencies

5.6.1 A Fostering Service

Foster carers provide the majority of placements for children who are looked after. The service absorbs a significant proportion of children's services available budget and needs to be responsive to the expectations and support needs of carers, and the profile of the needs of looked after children. The number of placements purchased from independent fostering agencies has increased and social services authorities' placement strategies need to take account of the role of the independent sector.
Social services authorities have, sometimes in partnership with independent agencies, sought to develop foster care as an alternative to residential placements. This trend is reflected in annual statistics and many children have benefited from the opportunity of placement with foster families. There is evidence however that foster care does not meet the needs of, and is not the placement of choice for all children and this should be reflected in placement strategies.

Foster carers provide placements for some children with very complex needs for whom an inter-agency approach to supporting children and foster carers is likely to improve placement stability and choice. Foster care may also be provided alongside other services, for example family support, day care and residential services, including those provided by education and health, to implement children’s care plans.

Foster care placements are often not intended to provide a permanent home for the child but may be part of a time-limited intervention to assess and meet their needs. Such arrangements have sometimes been successful in improving placement stability for children with complex needs who may be more difficult to place and present challenging behaviour. Foster placements also provide a valuable resource for young people in particular circumstances e.g. mothers with babies, young people on remand and completing community elements of sentences and unaccompanied asylum seekers.

These developments and the trend for many children’s homes to provide placements for a very small number of children mean that some foster care placements have many features in common with small children’s homes.

Recruitment, retention and development of foster carers and the social care workforce is essential to, and needs to be addressed alongside, the development of placement strategies.

5.6.2 Management and Staffing

Policy and Practice Action Point

Social services should consider how they can best ensure the necessary capacity at management and practitioner level to recruit, retain and provide training and development opportunities for foster carers to achieve an effective foster care service for looked after children in their area.

Key Agency: Social Services
The quality and effectiveness of a fostering service is strongly influenced by the organisational support it receives\(^{17}\). Agencies that provide foster care services require sufficient qualified and experienced staff to carry out the associated work. The Welsh Assembly Government is working with other interests to improve recruitment and retention of social care workers\(^{18}\).

### 5.6.3 Foster Carer Recruitment, Development and Retention

#### Development Action Point

Social services authorities should consider working together and with others to address matters related to the payment of allowances and fees to foster carers.

**Key Agencies:** Social Services / Independent Fostering Agencies

#### Policy and Practice Action Points

1. Local authorities should continue to develop, and where appropriate in collaboration with others, strategies to recruit and retain foster carers.

   **Key Agency:** Social Services

2. Local authorities should actively manage the retention of foster carers through undertaking regular reviews; open communication with carers; involvement in decision-making and addressing individual and service wide carer support needs.

   **Key Agency:** Social Services

3. Local authorities should consider working collaboratively, and with others, where this will lead to improvements in foster care services.

   **Key Agency:** Social Services

Local authorities are working together, and with other agencies, to improve the recruitment, development and retention of foster carers. They are aware that the pool of potential foster carers is finite and of the need for a timely response to people who are ‘thinking about it’. Foster care agencies are competing, with the wider market, and sometimes with one another. Work on the development of strategic approaches to recruitment and retention of foster carers needs to continue and be supported at local and national level to recruit and retain carers.

Foster carers undertake responsibilities that require them to be competent and demands high levels of personal commitment. Factors that foster carers identify as important in their relationship with the agency include:

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\(^{17}\) Standards for Foster Care Agencies - National Assembly for Wales 2001

\(^{18}\) Report of the Task and Finish Group on Workforce Issues on Social Care - 2001
- open and honest communication;
- acknowledgement and understanding of the value of their role;
- recognition of the financial issues, practical problems and emotional challenges experienced by carers, including the needs of the foster family's birth or adoptive children
- involvement in planning and developing the service;
- support services that help meet the needs of the children; and
- the availability of training opportunities.

Levels of financial support for foster carers differ between agencies. There is evidence that higher levels of fees is a factor in carers moving between agencies although other factors are also believed to be influential, for example the quality of support for children and carers and of relationships between the agency and carers. The Fostering Network recommends a rate that is generally accepted as the benchmark for the maintenance element. Agencies are not agreed on the fee element and this may be an area that would benefit from a collaborative approach to further work.

New tax relief rules were introduced from 6th April 2003. Many UK foster carers will now pay no tax on their income from fostering, as from 2003-2004 tax year. Legislation is set out in the Finance Act 2003.

The Welsh Assembly Government’s Training Support Programme includes a target for 25% of foster carers to have achieved NVQ in Social Care Level 3 by 2004.

### 5.7 Adoption

#### Policy and Practice Action Points

1. Local authorities should have arrangements in place and work with other agencies to reduce delay in the adoption of children for whom adoption has been identified as being in their best interest.

   **Key Agency:** Social Services / CAFCASS / Family Courts

2. Social services authorities should ensure that adoption support services are available to support adoptive families and promote stability for adopted children.

   **Key Agency:** Social Services / Education / Health / Voluntary Adoption Agencies, other independent agencies

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19 Previously the National Foster Care Association
The Prime Minister’s initiative that led to the report of the Performance and Innovation Unit, the Adoption White Paper and the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which will be implemented by 2005, has raised the profile of adoption as a placement option in achieving permanence for looked after children.

Consortia of adoption agencies are developing in Wales and have potential to make a significant contribution to improving placement choice and stability for those looked after children for whom adoption has been identified as being in their best interest.

The Performance and Innovation Unit’s review identified delays in securing adoptive placements for children as a key issue to be addressed. Information from authorities in Wales supports this view. Delays occur in care planning for children, assessment of adoption applicants, matching children with potential adopters and the court process. The introduction of the Adoption Register is intended to assist the timely identification of suitable adoptive parents as matches for children who need adoption.

Adoption provides permanence for a child but does not exclude the possibility that the child or adoptive parents will experience difficulties and will need adoption support services. Some may even be anticipated and planned for when the child is placed. For some children support from services such as education, health and CAMHS, may be vital to the success of a placement and to good outcomes for the child.

Local authorities should have clear policies in relation to the role of residence orders in the context of placement strategies and procedural arrangements for consideration of their applicability in individual cases.

5.8 Residential Care

5.8.1 Establishing the Role of Residential Care

**Development Action Point**

The Welsh Assembly Government will commission a review to consider the purpose and future shape of residential care services for children in Wales with the aim of establishing a cogent theoretical basis and strategic direction for the development of an effective, quality service.

*Key Agencies:* Welsh Assembly Government / Social Services / Education / Health / Independent Providers
Social services authority placement strategies should include clear statements about the role of residential care in meeting the needs of local children and describe the arrangements for delivering good quality residential care when it is required.

Key Agencies: Social Services

There is a range of residential provision across the statutory and independent sectors. While the availability of placements in children’s homes has declined, adolescents in particular sometimes express a preference for them.

There are significantly different views on the role of residential care in meeting the care and welfare needs of children and young people that influence the strategic planning decisions of local authorities.

Residential care is often considered a relatively expensive service that absorbs a large share of resources in authorities that provide it and reduces service flexibility. Some authorities consider they can use resources better by purchasing such placements from external providers when they are needed. Others are of the view that children should not be placed in residential care and wish to focus their resources on developing alternatives.

Awareness of the history of abuse in children’s homes and the difficulties in ensuring that each child’s needs are met within a group that could include children with competing and perhaps conflicting needs are factors in the decline of residential care. The reduced availability of residential placements for children is a factor in the difficulties authorities experience in seeking placements for children with complex needs. In such circumstances they may be negotiating with providers of whom they have little or no direct knowledge, have limited choices, and little prospect of influencing costs.

5.8.2 Residential Care Services

Residential services provided by social services authorities in Wales are generally community based children’s homes, some of which have specialist functions for example providing placements, usually a series of short (respite) placements, for disabled children. The variation in local authority provision of residential services is significant in terms of the number of children’s homes and placements. While the larger authorities tend to manage the highest number of in-house residential places, some smaller authorities have disproportionately high
levels of provision. There is no evidence that local authorities are planning to expand the overall level of locally provided and managed residential services. On the contrary, reports of change indicate a net reduction in available placements. The independent sector’s development of residential units in Wales has steadily increased. Many of the independent homes are small, providing one or two placements, for children who need high levels of support. Most children accommodated in these homes are from outside the county in which the home is located.

Placement strategies should include clear statements about the role of residential care in meeting the needs of children and describe the arrangements for delivering good quality residential care when it is required.

Residential care should be part of a flexible range of services - including foster and day care. Placements "local" to where they normally live increases the likelihood of successful outcomes for children and effectiveness of placement supervision. Collaboration between local authority services and health is essential if the necessary range of residential provision is to be available.

Development of residential services for children should encourage diversity of provision and specialisation within settings. Not all children’s needs can be met by services provided in Wales, and similarly children from England will require access to services in Wales.

Clear leadership and effective management is critical for delivering better outcomes for children in residential care. The Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned work to explore the strategic and professional context for the development of residential childcare in Wales.

5.8.3 Residential Schools

Policy and Practice Action Point

Local authorities should consider their policies, procedures and planning arrangements for the placement of children in residential schools in conjunction with their placement strategy for looked after children

Key Agencies: Social Services / Education / Health

At the time of publication 5 authorities in Wales had no residential care for children that they manage or are responsible for. 3 authorities each managed a unit providing respite care for disabled children. 2 authorities had assisted community homes managed and maintained by a voluntary organisation. 1 authority managed a secure unit. The remaining 14 authorities managed between 1 and 6 residential units providing a mixture of parallel family care and respite care for disabled children.
Most children with special educational needs live at home with their families and attend local schools. A minority, mainly disabled children, attend special units, often attached to mainstream schools and a small number of children with high levels of dependency and low incidence specialist needs are placed in special education residential schools. They may also have social welfare and health needs that are met through placement in the setting.

The Welsh Assembly Government is seeking to reduce the fragmentation of education services for 'low incidence and high dependency disability groups'

Local education authorities and social services place children in special schools. The needs and vulnerability of children placed in residential schools are often similar to those of children placed in other specialist residential settings.

5.9 Transition to Independence

Policy and Practice Action Point

Local authorities should develop a strategy in partnership with housing providers to ensure a range of accommodation options are available to meet the assessed needs of relevant children and other care leavers

Key Agencies: Social Services / Housing / Social Landlords

A local authority’s placement strategy must consider the need and demand for accommodation of looked after children aged 16-18 years and for care leavers aged 16 -21 years. Attention must be given to providing services to meet the needs of children who will require support as adults, in particular disabled children, and to ensure a smooth and planned transition for them.

Social services authorities will need to provide or facilitate a range of accommodation options including:

- enabling children and young people to remain in the accommodation in which they lived whilst being looked after
- providing looked after accommodation to meet the needs of young people over 16 years
- other transitional accommodation with varying degrees of support such as trainer flats, hostels
- specialist accommodation for young people with specific needs, for example disabled young people, pregnant young women or single parents
• foyers which provide accommodation, communal living and employment opportunities for young people, many of whom may be care leavers
• self-contained accommodation with support
• independent tenancies

Children and young people sometimes need accommodation in a crisis and arrangements need to include emergency provision that is safe, age appropriate and supportive. Mixed age direct entry hostel and “bed and breakfast” accommodation are not regarded as suitable. An effective multi-agency accommodation strategy should mean recourse to bed and breakfast provision or other unsuitable accommodation is unnecessary. Personal housing plans describing young people’s needs and levels of support required to meet them will assist in developing the confidence of private landlords with suitable provision.

Arrangements to provide young people with alternative accommodation should always be based on encouraging them and their relatives to develop or reconnect with family and community support networks.

Key areas to be addressed by local authorities when developing services include:

• Planning arrangements that link the needs of care leavers, other young people and the universal demand for services, and ensure that housing and social services are delivered in a manner that avoids gaps in provision
• Corporate parenting responsibilities
• Incorporating the views of children and young people
• Ensuring that, where appropriate, the approval of foster carers (or conversion of foster placements to approved lodgings) and the statements of purpose of children’s homes include the capacity to care for young people up to the age of 21 years.
• The development of supported lodgings for young people with complex needs
• Developing the role of independent organisations and providers21 and extending arrangements for registering landlords and properties to ensure that all arrangements secured for young people meet a minimum standard
• Ensuring that placements in accommodation:
  - are effectively supported to reduce potential for failure; and
  - contingency arrangements are available for young people.

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21 includes private and social landlords
• Planning for ongoing education (including further and higher education), training and employment

• Engaging with health authorities to provide the range of health services required by young people
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APPENDIX ONE

EXTRACTS FROM BACKGROUND REPORTS

Report of the Examination Team on Childcare Procedures and Practice in North Wales

Recommendation 2

Local authorities should pay particular attention to auditing foster care placement as part of their analysis of need in furtherance of their children’s services plans.

Recommendation 3

Local authorities, in assessing their needs for residential care, should recognise that it is unlikely that they can be entirely self-sufficient. Collaborative commissioning between neighbouring authorities, and including Education and Health Authorities, could provide a range of facilities that could best meet the needs of children and young people.

Recommendation 4

Local authorities should plan on the assumption that they will at some time make placements in expensive external facilities, including secure accommodation, and that the financing of such placements should be a corporate priority if it cannot be achieved through the social services budget.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Office should offer assistance to local authorities to enable them to undertake the task of developing a comprehensive placement strategy as part of their strategic plans for children.

Report of the North Wales Child Abuse Tribunal of Inquiry:

Recommendation 65

Local Authorities, in collaboration with voluntary and other relevant organisations and acting together with other local authorities where appropriate, should prepare costed development plans for children’s services to ensure (amongst other things) that:
a) there is an adequate range of residential care provision of appropriate quality, including secure provision, within reasonable reach of a child's family or other relevant roots;
b) such residential care includes safe places where children can recover when relationships breakdown;
c) as in (a), there is an adequate range of fostering facilities available of similar quality and accessibility;
d) all residential placements are designed to be developmental and therapeutic rather than merely custodial;
e) full educational opportunities are available for children looked after, including remedial education.
APPENDIX TWO

CHILDREN FIRST PROGRAMME IN WALES - OBJECTIVES

To ensure that children in need gain maximum life chance benefits from education opportunities, health care and social care.

To ensure that children looked after gain maximum life chance benefits from education opportunities, health care and social care.

To ensure that children are protected from emotional, physical or sexual abuse and neglect (significant harm).

To ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care.

To ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and are able to participate socially and economically as citizens.

To ensure that children with specific social needs arising out of disability or a health condition are living in families or other appropriate settings in the community where their assessed needs are adequately met and reviewed.

To ensure that referral and assessment processes discriminate between different types and levels of need produce a timely and effective service response and actively involve users and carers in tailoring individual packages of care.

To ensure that resources are planned and provided at levels which represent best value for money, allowing for choice and different responses for different needs and circumstances.

To actively involve users and carers in planning services.

To ensure through regulatory powers and duties that children in regulated services are protected from harm and poor care standards.

To ensure that social care workers and foster carers are appropriately skilled, trained and qualified, and to promote the uptake of training at all levels.
APPENDIX THREE

IMPLEMENTATION GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

To support the implementation of the strategic framework for improving placement choice and stability

Functions

To consult with relevant interests and propose a way forward on matters with potential for development on a national or regional basis by:

(a) advising on the commissioning of development and research work in response to the development action points.
(b) promoting and reviewing the implementation of the framework.
(c) contributing to the review of the framework document in response to policy changes and practice development in services for looked after children.

Membership

Social services authorities
Local education authorities
Health commissioners
NHS Trusts
Housing
Youth Justice
Voluntary Organisations
Private organisations
Welsh Assembly Government Officials

Secretariat

Welsh Assembly Government