

# Planning for moving on from residential child care

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First published: 25 Mawrth 2019

Last updated: 28 Hydref 2024

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Go to <http://content.socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/improving-care-and-support/children-who-are-looked-after/planning-for-moving-on-from-residential-child-care> for the latest version.

Find out how you can support the children you care for to move on from the home

## **An introduction to moving on from residential child care**

Depending on their age and individual circumstances, young people who leave children's homes may move on to live in a range of different settings, including:

- to a different home
- to foster care
- returning to their families
- a move to more independent living.

## **What does it feel like to experience change?**

Everybody experiences change in their lives, sometimes planned, sometimes not:

- a child moving from primary to secondary school
- a young person leaving home for the first time
- someone starting a new job.

These different changes often provoke similar feelings, including:

- looking forward to new opportunities, experiences and achievements
- feeling anxious about the unknown and loss of the familiar
- uncertainty about how much you can control or influence these changes.

The children you're caring for will have experienced many changes or transitions in their lives. As well as not living at home, many children will have moved homes regularly, often to different areas and schools.

Over 30 per cent of children who are looked after in Wales have moved home more than twice in the past year and 10 per cent have moved more than three times. This instability can cause problems for children, particularly if they have to move school or move out of the area.

Imagine how it would feel if you moved, changed your job, and lost touch with family and friends all at once. Now imagine doing that two or three times every year. The more children move, the higher the risk of this becoming a cycle.

We know stable long-term relationships help children achieve their ambitions. This is why moving children should be avoided if possible. But if there is no other way, any change needs to be planned and made in the best interests of the child you're working with.

Tip - When asked about moving children always say that if their belongings are moved in rubbish bags, they feel like they are rubbish. You should make sure any child moving from your home has proper bags or suitcases, and never put their belongings in rubbish bags.

## **The importance of the child's wishes and feelings**

Any change must consider the child or young person's wishes and feelings, taking account of their age and understanding, and they must be kept at the centre of all planning and decision-making. You can help them understand why decisions are being made and help them talk about what they want to happen. An [Independent Professional Advocate](#) can also support them to explore this.

*We should listen more to children and young people in residential care and act on what they tell us. They should be truly active in their care planning. We should take more account of their insight into their own behaviour e.g. what helps calm them when they are feeling anxious. We should negotiate where at all possible but give clear explanation when we cannot meet their wishes. For meaningful engagement with young people, professionals need to take the time to get to know them. Advocacy (both formal and informal) can strengthen our understanding of children's views*

[Child Exploitation: Multi-agency working where children are placed in residential placements out of county, go missing and are at risk of sexual exploitation,](#)  
Care Inspectorate Wales and South Wales Police, 2017

Voices from Care Cymru asked young people for their views on leaving residential care. This is what they said about having 'voice and control':

- "One option is not a choice"
- "It's my life, don't just tell me"
- "I didn't feel able to say no"
- "Staff changes can affect our ability to speak up"
- "I feel more in control when I'm listened to"

- “I agreed to something that wasn’t right for me due to false promises – I wish I could go back and hold my ground a bit more. Now I would say things and stand up for myself”.

Voices from Care (2018) [Young People’s Views on Leaving Residential Care](#)

## **The importance of good assessment and planning**

Decisions about where a child should live must always be supported by an up-to-date assessment of their needs and family circumstances. Planning should be informed by assessments made by the home and by the child’s care plan, which will have been developed since they came to live at the home.

When considering any placement decision, local authorities must always be guided by their duty to [safeguard and promote the child’s well-being](#). As far as is reasonably possible, local authorities are expected to ensure that the placement:

- allows the child to live near home
- meets the child’s needs in their care plan and, once they are 16, the outcomes in their pathway plan
- doesn’t disrupt the child’s education or training
- lets the child to live with any siblings who are also being looked after
- gives suitable accommodation if the child is disabled.

When making decisions about where to accommodate children and young people, local authorities must consider:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child ([according to their age and understanding](#))
- the views, wishes and feelings of parents or other person with parental responsibility, where this is in the child's best interests
- the [child's religious, cultural and linguistic identity](#)
- the [child's sexuality and gender identity](#)
- any [disability or sensory impairment](#), including any emotional, behavioural and mental health needs
- arrangements for keeping in touch with family
- arrangements to spend time with friends, and keep up hobbies.

## **How can you help children with moving on?**

Your input is important when it's time to start thinking about children moving from the home. You've been caring for the child or young person and you know them well. Because of this, you can help their social worker complete a balanced and thorough assessment of their needs and strengths as they move.

Your everyday knowledge can help give a picture of the young person and make them 'come alive' to somebody reading about them. For example, do they really like cooking, are they good at music, do they make people laugh? The small things you know about them can help give a complete picture, which is really important to anyone supporting them once they've left your home.

Because you know the child so well, you should always be involved in the planning for them moving on from the home. If you're concerned you're not being involved or that decisions aren't in the child's best interests, raise this with your manager and the child's social worker and advocate for them.

Equally, because you know them so well, your practical and emotional support in planning and helping the child move on and settle in their new home is important. Where possible, they should be able to visit where they are moving to and ideally the moving process will be gradual and at the child's pace. Your home may be able to keep in touch with them for a time (following your [organisation's policies and with your manager's agreement](#)), so they still have a link with you, and they maintain the stable relationships we know are so important.

The Part 6 Code of Practice explains local authority responsibilities for care leavers including in relation to pathway plans and assessments:

[Part 6 Code of Practice \(Looked After and Accommodated Children\) for the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act](#)

## Useful resources

[Our work to support children who are looked after](#)

[Our chosen or 'curated' research about the number who are looked after](#)

See our page about the [Rights of children living in children's homes](#) for links to children's rights, participation and advocacy.

[The Right Care: Children's Rights in Residential Care in Wales](#)

[Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#)

[The impacts of abuse and neglect on children and comparison of different placement options.](#)

## We want your feedback

Help us to improve the Residential child care worker resource by telling us what you think about it in our short [four question survey](#).