

Children in care are doing well in Wales – new research shows

The Welsh Government commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) to carry out an analysis of outcomes for children and young people 4 to 5 years after a final Care Order.

The study set out to explore the placement journeys for children in care in Wales, how these compare with the outcomes aspired to in their Care Plan and the key success factors associated with positive placements.

The large scale analysis involved all of the 1,076 children and young people with a final Care Order made in Wales in the 12 month period from April 2012 to March 2013. A smaller representative sub-sample of 79 cases was then drawn from five local authority areas to allow more in-depth analysis to be conducted.

The report found:

- Over three quarters of the whole cohort of children experienced a high level of placement stability – with either no placement move (30%) or only one (46%) placement move over the 4-5 year period that the study looked at.
- 71% of the smaller sub-sample had overall positive outcomes in relation to their home environment, communication and attachments; education; physical health and the absence of offending; 19% had mixed outcomes; and 10% had overall negative outcomes;
- Whilst 78% of the whole cohort of children was officially recorded as having a primary need for care relating to abuse and neglect, the in-depth analysis found that almost all children in the sub-sample had experienced abuse and neglect before the Care Order was made.

The study is part of the work of the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group. The Group is taking forward a significant programme of work to help safely reduce the number of children coming into care, improve outcomes for children already in care and better support care leavers to adulthood and independence.

Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Improving outcomes and life chances for care experienced children is a key priority for me. This Government is committed to ensuring the life chances of looked after children are the same as for other children.

“I am pleased to see many children and young people are doing well in care in Wales, with over three quarters of the children this study looked at experiencing a high level of placement stability. The study highlights the good work that is taking place by both

children's social services and their education partners throughout Wales to secure the best possible outcomes for children in care.

“However, there are still significant challenges for children in care in Wales, particularly in supporting children who are dealing with the impact of abuse and trauma. We must learn and use the findings from this work to help ensure the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children are addressed in a therapeutic way and continue to focus on providing high quality and long-term placements that will help to meet their needs.”