

# Children's Minister announces £15m to expand services to support families and help reduce the need for children to enter care

As at March 2017, there were 5,954 children in care in Wales, and increase of 5% on the previous year. This increasing trend is being seen across the UK.

The funding to expand preventative and early intervention services announced today will be used to build on the support the Welsh Government and its partners are providing to families and children early on, so they are supported to stay together and ultimately reduce the need for children to enter care.

The funding is part of an additional £30m which has been allocated to Regional Partnership Boards to help strengthen integrated working, announced in the Draft Budget 2019-20 by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford.

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

“As part of our programme for government, Taking Wales Forward, we set out a clear commitment to examine ways of ensuring looked after children enjoy the same life chances as other children and if necessary reform the way they are looked after. Our national strategy, Prosperity for All also describes our priorities around supporting children and families at the edge of care and young people in care, particularly as they transition towards adulthood.

“So I'm delighted to confirm we will invest £15m next year to progress our shared ambition that by intervening with support early we reduce the need for children to enter care and supporting children in care. I expect local authorities, third sector organisations and health boards to work in partnership to use this fund flexibly and creatively across their regions. It is essential for successful delivery and want to thank them for their co-operation and contribution so far.”

As part of the Welsh Government's Improving Outcomes for Children programme, Ministers are taking an ambitious cross-Government and cross-sector approach to help achieve their priorities and fulfil their commitment to improve the lives of children in care. The programme is increasing its focus on addressing the factors which can lead to children requiring local authority care.

Last year, the Welsh Government invested £9m to support care experienced

children.

This has resulted in:

- A £5m investment in local authority edge of care services meant that local authorities helped over 3,600 children to remain within the family unit by working with more than 2,000 families
- Over 1,900 care-experienced children across Wales have received funds via the Welsh Government's £1m St David's Day Fund, to support their transition to adulthood and independence
- The establishment of Regional Reflect services. During the past year, these services supported 150 young parents whose children have been placed in the care system. They have helped with issues such as contraception, housing, substance misuse, mental health and practical parenting skills
- £1m has been provided to extend the provision Personal Advisers so that all care leavers up to the age of 25 are offered a PA, regardless of circumstances. As a result an additional 20 Personal Advisers have been recruited and the extended offer taken up by more than 500 care leavers
- Care leavers have been helped to access opportunities in education, employment or training – 70 young people are now participating in a local authority work placement or traineeship scheme.

In May this year, research was published on placement outcomes for children after a final care order. This important research showed that over three quarters of the children in the study experienced a high level of placement stability as well as identifying other positive experiences of care.

The Minister added:

“We have made significant progress in improving outcomes for children in Wales. The work being done across Wales is leading to real, tangible outcomes which are having a direct and positive impact on the lives of children and young people.”