



Care Forum Wales

SPECIAL INTEREST FORUM RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE

# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE TO PLACEMENT PLANNING



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## Introduction

The residential Child Care Special Interest Forum was launched by Gwenda Thomas, AM, the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services in November 2009 at the City Hall, Cardiff.

The aim of the Special Interest Forum is to raise the profile of residential child care and education within Wales and to provide a link between practitioners, commissioners and regulators with the purpose of promoting evidence based practice that will ensure residential child care is used as a specific positive intervention for children and young people as part of the continuum of care. The Forum works with the Care Council for Wales and CSSIW for the continued development, implementation and monitoring of high quality national standards.

A Steering Group consisting of representatives from private, statutory and third sector providers meet on a bi-monthly basis at Coleg Powys, Newtown. The Forum also periodically meets with representatives from the Welsh Government, Care Council for Wales and CSSIW to consider issues of common interest and ensures that the views and interests of the sector are fully represented.

For more information or to become involved in the Steering Group please contact Steve Elliott, Chair on 01978 313777 or email: [steve@prospectcsare.co.uk](mailto:steve@prospectcsare.co.uk)



## Foreword

The Welsh Government is committed to improving the life chances of looked after children/young people in Wales and placement stability remains a key objective. I believe that good planning and commissioning of quality placements are essential to achieving better outcomes for looked after children/young people.

I would like to thank the Care Forum Wales Residential Child Care Special Interest Forum for the time and skill they have invested in ensuring each child/young person, although unable to live at home are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Together we will continue to work to form a powerful force to champion the rights and entitlements of all children/young people who spend time in residential care.

**Gwenda Thomas AM**

Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services

May 2011

## 1. Purpose of this guidance

It is recognised and accepted that in order to achieve better outcomes for children /young people, placement planning needs to clearly focus on identifying how their day to day needs are met. The Welsh Government remain committed to placement choice and for some children/young people, residential care will be the best option. As such residential staff have a key role to play in the process of placement planning for the children/young people in their care.

This guidance for residential child care staff is intended to support and provide best practice in placement planning, set alongside the roles and responsibilities of the local authority.

## 2. Rationale of guidance

### 2.1 An audit of the Welsh Government guidance 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future' undertaken by CSSIW in 2009

Concluded –

- The planning for, and review, of placements remains poor and in many cases does not comply with the Children Act 1989. There are no significant differences in the quality of this between Welsh and English authorities;
- the evidence would suggest that the pre placement planning elements of Towards a Stable Life and Brighter Future which apply to Welsh authorities but which would be good practice for English authorities are not embedded. A similar judgment can be reached about the cross border elements of the policy which relate to health provision;
- pre placement planning is poor, documentation about needs that you would expect to be available to homes/schools, in order for them to properly understand the needs of children/young people and meet them, was not consistently in place. Specifically, the evidence of pre planning for the health and education of children/young people was poor;
- care plans were in place for less than three quarters of the sample, 72 per cent, and reviews taking place as required in 78 per cent;

### 2.2 The CSSIW Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2008-2009

Reported under priorities for improvement -

In 2008-2009, 27% of inspections reported inadequacies in placement planning for children/young people. This reflects the previous year's position. In order to achieve the best outcomes for children/young people, placement plans need to clearly identify how the day to day care of the child/young person meets the aim of the care plan. This is an area that needs the sustained attention of both managers and providers.

Improvements are required in:

- the quality of information including that provided by the local authorities who have placed the child/young person;
- the timeliness of placement plans and reviews;

the specific actions needed to achieve the best outcome for the child/young person

## 3. Children in Residential Care - Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Children in Residential Care

- 3.1 Residential staff will either live with, or spend the majority of their working time with a child/young person placed in residential care – and it's fair to say that they have a lot to contribute to the care planning process. It is a requirement within the Children's Homes Regulations that the carer or link worker should routinely be asked to contribute to any assessment taking place, and in making plans.
- 3.2 Residential staff have an important role as advocates for children/young people, ensuring that they have a say in what is happening and what is written in assessments and placement plans. This might mean simply explaining things again to a child/young person, answering questions for this could mean communicating on behalf of a child/young person who doesn't feel able to express their views on paper or in meetings. This is different to the role of independent professional advocacy that is provided to support a young person independent of their placement. The relevance of utilising a Person Centered Planning Framework in working with children/young people in a residential setting is currently being explored (see Appendix 1).
- 3.3 Identifying and meeting the needs of looked after children/young people can feel overwhelming and a bit daunting. The looked after children/young people population is diverse and each child/young person will have different and often complex needs.
- 3.4 As well as looking at the internal world of a child/young person, considerations have to be given to the environment in which the child/young person lives; past, present and future. There may be needs that have to be addressed as a result. There also has to be an awareness that looked after children/young people may face discrimination on many levels; because of their ethnicity, culture, religion or beliefs, their gender, sexuality, age or because they are in the care system.
- 3.5 As a child/young person even if they are near adulthood there are safety issues to consider; do they know how to look after themselves, what to do if they find themselves in a difficult situation, and how to keep themselves safe when they are on their own or with friends. For children/young people who require long-term support post 18, securing support from adult services may not be straightforward as the criteria for services may significantly differ from that set for children/young people and evidence suggests that the support offered to care leavers is patchy and inconsistent.
- 3.6 A large body of evidence suggests that problem behaviours presented by children/young people with learning disabilities are best assessed and modified within a behaviour analytic model. This model demonstrates that all problem behaviour has a function, for example, gaining attention, access to tangibles, escape from demands or sensory stimulation. Problem behaviour can be assessed via a functional analysis by directly observing the antecedent events that precede the behaviour and the consequences that follow. Once these events have been shown to reliably

occur the problem behaviour can then be replaced, through a skill development programme, with an appropriate behaviour that serves the same function.

3.7 The role of residential care in meeting the needs of children/young people cannot be underestimated. As Williams (2005) citing Rutter (1991) states;

“Rutter (1991) demonstrated that environment and interventions can influence and compensate for damaging experiences providing new pathways and opportunities for children to develop and achieve.”

3.8 Acquiring knowledge about child and adolescent development, attachment theory, resilience and understanding risk factors are essential to care planning. Whilst this practice document does not cover these areas in any detail, there is already a lot of literature available that can help in building knowledge, skills and confidence. A sample of this literature is listed in the bibliography at the end of this document.

#### 4. Legal Context of Placement Planning

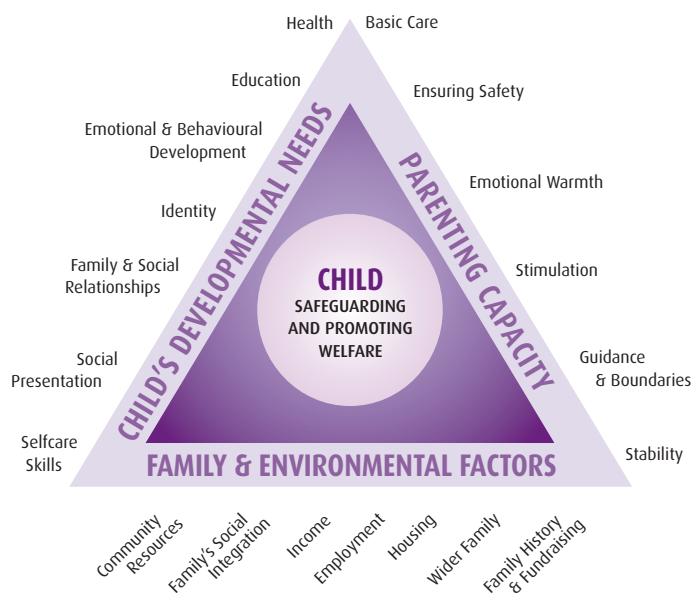
4.1 Regulation 4 - Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 provides for the making of arrangements for accommodation and maintenance of children/young people, the promotion of their welfare and for the planning of placements.

4.2 Regulation 5 - Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 makes provision for the matters to be considered by a responsible authority when making arrangements to place a child/young person, including the procedures to be followed where a placement outside the area in which a child/young person normally lives is being considered. The regulation also places a responsible authority under a duty to make a written record of the reasons for its actions.

### 6. The Importance of Assessment

A placement plan should be built upon a holistic assessment which identifies developmental need, the capacity to meet need and an evaluation of what has happened to the child/young person. The plan should identify clear, required and intended outcomes. The assessment must be continually updated and fed into the revisions of the plan.

#### Assessment Framework Triangle



### 5. Introduction – why plan?

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CARE PLANNING**

<div style="background-color: #4a4a8a; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Good Child Care Practice</div> <div style="text-align: center;">▼</div> <div style="background-color: #4a4a8a; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Planning</div> <div style="text-align: center;">▼</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A sense of security and direction;</li> <li>■ A focus on needs; clear targets to aim for;</li> <li>■ partnership</li> </ul>	<div style="background-color: #4a4a8a; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Poor Child Care Practice</div> <div style="text-align: center;">▼</div> <div style="background-color: #4a4a8a; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Lack of Planning</div> <div style="text-align: center;">▼</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Drift, aimlessness;</li> <li>■ insecurity and tension;</li> <li>■ confusion/lack of clarity and direction;</li> <li>■ isolation</li> </ul>
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## 7. Assessment & Care Planning

The Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 reflect the emphasis in the Children Act 1989 and 2004 on partnerships between parents, children/young people and the responsible authority and between the responsible authority and other agencies, as being the most effective means of meeting the needs of the individual child/young person. Key principles of the Children Act include:

- taking into account the views of children/young people, consulting them and keeping them informed;
- giving due consideration to children/young people's race, culture, religion and linguistic background;
- the importance of families and working with parents;
- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/young people who are looked after; and
- recognition of inter-agency responsibility

These principles should be taken into account by local authorities and their partners when delivering their responsibilities within this guidance.

The Welsh Government have adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the basis for all its work with children and young people.

## 8. Considerations to which responsible authorities are to have regard

- 8.1 Regulation 5 and schedules 1, 2, and 3 of the Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 set out the matters that the responsible authority must take into account when making arrangements to place a child/young person. These include consideration of the child/young person's physical, emotional and mental health, education, along with the child/young person's health history and that of his family, if available.
- 8.2 The 2007 regulations have been strengthened to place a new duty on local authorities and health partners to have particular regard to any mental health or special educational needs a child/young person may have and any services required to meet those needs. This is in recognition of the high incidence of mental health problems and additional educational needs amongst the looked after population and the need for early identification and intervention.
- 8.3 In addition to meeting the child/young person's immediate social care, health and education needs, consideration should be given to contact arrangements with family, arrangements to spend time with friends, to maintain sporting or other social or leisure pursuits, and to racial, ethnic, religious and language needs. (For example, local authority education provision in some areas of Wales is in the medium of Welsh and would not immediately be suitable for a child/young person who does not speak Welsh. Conversely, a child/young person whose first language is Welsh may have difficulty adjusting to education in English). Particular consideration of suitability

must be made when placing black and ethnic minority children/young people.

## 9. Identifying suitable placements using the CCSR Database

- 9.1 The Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR), an all Wales cross sector database of placement provision, will assist local authorities to make individual placements with a better matching of need.
- 9.2 Section 25(8) of the Children Act 2004 requires that children's services authorities in Wales and each of their relevant partners must in exercising their functions have regard to any guidance given to them for the purpose by the Welsh Government. The 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future' guidance published by the Welsh Government requires responsible authorities to have regard to the availability of placements on the CCSR database.
- 9.3 Consideration should take place when assessing need with regard to the placement needs of individual children/young people. The Placement Panel should also consider what matching activity has been undertaken on the CCSR when considering the recommendation for an external placement.

## 10. Children placed outside the area in which they normally reside

- 10.1 It is important for children/young people to remain within their own area wherever possible and appropriate. A placement within the child/young person's home area allows for continuity of health care and education and makes it easier for the child/young person to maintain contact with birth parents and other significant people in their lives. Maintaining contact with family has been found to contribute to placement stability and is a significant factor in achieving successful reunification with the child/young person's birth family on a planned basis or when leaving care. However, there are occasions when a placement outside the authority area will be in the child/young person's best interests. This may be to safeguard the child/young person or distance him from adverse influences, to keep a sibling group together, or to place the child/young person with relatives or friends with whom the child/young person has a relationship who live outside the local authority area. These judgments should be based on a thorough assessment and analysis of the child/young person's needs.
- 10.2 There is concern that children/young people cared for in out-of-authority placements are more vulnerable to placement breakdown and interrupted schooling. Their needs should be assessed and planned for in the same way as other children/young people, but there are logistical difficulties in how their needs and placement are supported and monitored. The result is that there is a less corporate approach to health and educational provision for such children/young people once they are outside the originating local authority.

10.3 Plans and systems should be in place, which will ensure that the child/young person's care, health and educational needs will be met appropriately. It is therefore essential to liaise with all relevant services and agencies. All arrangements, including funding, need to be settled in good time to ensure that young people are not moved before adequate care, health and education services can be provided.

## 11. Placement planning process

- Stage 1** Initial contact made to provider made by potential placing authorities to discuss if provider can, in principle, meet the needs of the particular child/young person.
- Stage 2** Information is received regarding the child/young person's current situation; placement requirements; objectives of placement; background history; education needs; health needs; risk factors.
- Stage 3** Paper assessment undertaken if a child/young person is considered suitable. Move to Stage 4.
- Stage 4** The views of the child / young person are taken into account, supported if necessary or appropriate by an independent professional advocate.
- Stage 5** Senior member of staff visit child/young person in present circumstances. Parents/Staff/Significant others also seen.
- Stage 6** Child/young person is invited to visit.
- Stage 7** Placement planning meeting held resulting in the drawing up of an Initial Placement Plan.

## 12. The initial placement plan and full placement plan

- 12.1 The Initial Placement Plan should identify the name and contact details of the child/young person's 'Link Worker' as prescribed under the Children's Homes Regulations 12 (1) (b), the date of the Initial Progress Review and others' responsibilities within a given time scale. Some initial placement plans will be more detailed, others very minimal. However, it is important that on admission the initial placement plan is discussed and agreement is confirmed by all parties signing the form.
- 12.2 Without proper care planning the child/young person will simply drift and the value of residential care as a resource will be lost. These points will be reviewed and discussed further at the Initial Progress Review where more definite plans in terms of the main Placement Plan will be developed. The Initial Progress Review takes place four weeks after the initial placement.
- 12.3 The Children's Homes Regulations, Reg. 12 require the registered person, before providing accommodation or as soon as possible thereafter, to prepare in consultation with the child/young person's placing authority, a placement plan. This regulation also prescribes what must be in the placement plan and this will be reviewed and refined during the placement. The plan should identify the child/young person's needs and how they can be met within both the short and long term and what are the anticipated outcomes.
- 12.4 It is essential that the child has been consulted about what is a significant decision in their life, and has had explained to them why decisions have been made which may not always be in accord with what they want. Children/young people should be provided with access to an independent advocate to help them express their views. This is to ensure that children/young people are effectively included as part of the planning and decision making process.

### 13. What makes a good plan?

According to the Riverland Development Corporation (2000) in Australia, there are several key principles to planning;

**A plan must be:**

- 1. Explicit:** all steps completely spelled out
- 2. Intelligible:** capable of being understood by those who will carry it out.
- 3. Flexible:** capable of accepting change.
- 4. Written:** committed to writing in a clear concise manner.

In specific reference to care planning for Looked after Children, Williams and McCann (2006) made the following suggestions as to what constitutes a good and bad care plan.

Although the table below suggests what a good care plan looks like, the principles could equally apply to any other type of plan.

### 14. Multi-disciplinary working

Although there may be a lead professional/s responsible for different aspects of care planning for Looked after Children, an obvious but nevertheless important point is that there has to be a multi-disciplinary approach to assessment and planning for children/young people. One person cannot hold the key to meeting all the child/young person's needs. The Children's Homes (Wales) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2007 introduced the role of Link Worker, who is intended to co-ordinate and take a lead in, the work undertaken with an individual child/young person. ACT (2003) in their guide to effective care planning suggest the following principles for effective multi-disciplinary working:

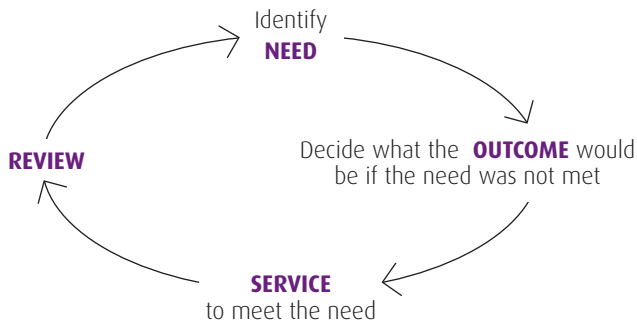
- Clarity on lead role/responsibility
- Early joint planning
- Co-operation between disciplines and agencies
- Clear channels of communication
- Shared information
- Shared protocol re consent and confidentiality
- Understanding each others' roles and terminology

What makes a good one?	What makes a bad one?
Needs-based assessment – analysis – outcomes – services – review	Service-led
Child/young person participates and understands the care plan	Child is excluded and does not understand the care plan
Participation of all those with parental responsibility, and carers	Non-participation of other agencies, and/or all those with parental responsibility, carers not involved
<b>S</b> pecific <b>M</b> easurable <b>A</b> chievable <b>R</b> ealistic or relevant <b>T</b> ime-limited	Not specific concerning who is responsible for what action; outcomes cannot be evaluated; not achievable nor realistic; no timescales
Focused	Lacks direction
Proactive	Reactive
Brings together other plans	Separate from other plans
Flexible and regularly reviewed	Rigid
Has a contingency plan	No contingency plan



### 15. The Model

The following model can be applied to the assessment process of any child/young person.



**NEED** What children/young people require to thrive, for their health and development in order to maximize their opportunities to reach their full potential as they move towards adulthood and beyond

**OUTCOME** Think about what do you want to achieve. In order to know whether you met the need, you need to establish exactly what outcome you are looking for. If the outcome states that the child/young person be happy, this would be too vague. How would you know if you achieved this? Is this actually a realistic outcome as no human being is happy all the time? Outcomes need to be SMART

- S** Specific
- M** Measurable
- A** Achievable
- R** Realistic
- T** Time limited

You should also be able to provide evidence that the outcome has been met.

**SERVICE** Think about the task that needs to be done to meet the need and who will do this. A service can be a person like a foster carer doing a particular task i.e. listening to a child/young person about their concerns or it could be an organisation providing or doing particular task/s that can meet a particular need i.e. a counselling service providing trauma counselling.

**REVIEW** - This is when you look at whether the service you put in place, or the task undertaken to address the need has achieved the outcome you were looking for. If the need has not been met, then you may need to look at another service to meet the need

**UNMET NEED** - It is extremely important to record needs that have been identified and have not been met or cannot be met and the reasons for this. This information is important for the Local Authority in terms of strategic planning and for highlighting issues affecting the ability to meet identified needs

### ADVOCACY

The purpose of placement planning is to give a sense of purpose and direction to the placement which is ultimately about what is to be achieved for a child/young person's future. As such it is important that children and young people are involved in a meaningful way in the drawing up of a placement plan so that their wishes and feelings can be fully taken into account when a plan is being developed.

On times the view of a child/young person may differ from their placing authority and/or service provider. In such circumstances it is important that young people have access to independent advocacy provided by an independent person or agency who does not work for the service provider or local authority. The purpose of accessing advocacy is to ensure that children and young people can be supported in making their views and wishes heard but not necessarily to have them acted upon as this may not be in their best interests. It is important that children and young people are heard and that they understand why decisions have been made about them.

## Summary

This practice guide is not intended to be an exhaustive exploration of all aspects of the placement planning process but rather a guide which will influence the development of improved practice.

The guide introduces ideas/suggestions as to how to make placement planning effective ultimately providing the best opportunity to meet the individual and specific needs of a child/young person.

The guide is intended to have relevance for providers of services as well as those responsible for the planning and commissioning of services. It is anticipated this will be the first in a series of practice guides published by the Residential Child Care Special Interest Forum of Care Forum Wales.

## References

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## Appendix 1 – Person Centered Planning (PCP)

### What is it?

Person Centered Planning is a process that supports an individual to express what is important to them and to use this information to develop a plan for their future. It is underpinned by an approach and way of thinking that values the individual (being supported) and their views.

The importance of involving children/young people in the Placement Planning process is well documented and this guidance document makes several references to the need to ensure that ‘the child/young person participates and understands the plan’. The guidance goes on to stress (p11) that ‘residential staff have an important role as advocates for children/young people, ensuring that they have a say in what is happening and what is written in assessments and plans’.

### National Developments

Within Wales, the Welsh Government is working to 7 Core Aims. These aims for children/young people summarise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and form the basis for decisions on priorities and objectives nationally. According to WG, they should also form the basis for decisions on strategy and service provision locally. One of the core aims is for children/young people to be ‘listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised’.

This same focus is also reflected in Estyn’s guidance ‘Listening to Learners’. This document reflects the increasing focus on directly listening to the views of children/young people within education, and as a part of the self evaluation and inspection processes.

Some initiatives within the wider UK have gone beyond just listening and consulting young people. This is on the basis that at best, consultation can sometimes fail to effectively engage the child/young person, and at worst can be tokenistic. One example of initiatives that have extended the boundaries is the ‘Getting it Right for Every Child - Consultation with Children and Families Report April 2010’.

Getting it Right for Every Child is a Scottish Government programme that aims to improve outcomes for all children/young people ensuring that children/young people get the help they need when they need it. This programme involves a different way of working for children’s services. It says that services should work together, involving the child/young person (and family) as a partner in planning.

In 2007, CSCI produced a report called ‘Growing Up Matters’. This is now available on the Ofsted website. This focuses on better transition planning for children/young people with complex needs (including behaviour). Extracts from the report include:

‘The national policy agenda expects children/young people and their families to be effectively involved. Only 14 of the parents in our 22 case studies felt listened to and consulted. In three of these 14 case studies, person-centered planning had resulted in bespoke adult care for the young people involved. One of these parents described how establishing the care package “had been a partnership” where everyone had an opportunity to contribute their views.

Person-centered planning approaches should be used, and in particular: 1) with transition plans drawn up with adult services from Year 9 onwards; 2) to co-ordinate assessments and thereby focus holistically on young people; and 3) to ensure timely decisions are agreed to avoid eleventh-hour changes to plans at the transition deadline’.

### Application of PCP in children’s services

The majority of PCP initiatives focus on children/young people with disabilities and the part that person centered planning has during the transition process into adult services. However, there is a view that the process (and the thinking that underpins it) of person centered planning has a wider application. This centers on supporting and enabling children/young people to express their ‘history’, preferences (likes, dislikes, interests, people, places etc), and wishes for the future. The focus is generally on what individuals ‘can do’, rather than what they ‘can’t do’. This forms what is often called a ‘person centered profile’.

This information can be captured in a wide range of ways but would almost always include words and images. The resultant profile can then be used to inform a person centered plan (i.e. what the child/young person wants for the future) and ultimately placement and care plans.

The whole process allows the child/young person to express themselves, ‘unhindered’ by the judgments of professionals. This is not to say, of course, that the views and judgments of professionals are not important and valid, but it adds another critical perspective; that of the child/young person.

Even in cases where the preferences and aspirations of the child/young person are not perceived as realistic or practical, they can still provide a catalyst for new responses and areas of activity. Children/Young People’s wishes are not dismissed, but are used to gain new insights.

How this process is introduced can involve a wide range of approaches and ‘tools’. Many of these are tried and tested. There is also potential to introduce strength based approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry. This focuses on building on the individual young person’s strengths in order to use this as the foundation for future planning.

In summary, the introduction of person centered thinking and planning has the potential to engage the child/young person in meaningful activity that can contribute positively to their future. The potential outputs and outcomes of the process include:

### Young people:

Identification of preferences and wishes that can be used to inform assessment and planning;

Identification of strengths and interests that can be used as the ‘foundation stones’ for development and ‘growth’;

Greater levels of positive engagement in the planning process and resultant actions;

Higher levels of self esteem and confidence leading to increased skills (social, educational, vocational and emotional)

### Staff and others:

An up-skilling of the workforce and greater levels of enthusiasm in the planning process;

A more positive perception of each young person by all those who support them.

### Developments over the next year

More recent developments in Wales have indicated an increasing interest in Person Centered Planning across client groups. The Care Council for Wales has developed recent (Jan 2011) guidance for managers and staff within older people’s services. This followed a study carried out in 2009. In addition, the Care Council’s project to stimulate the development of units of learning within the Qualification and Credit Framework for Wales (QCF(W)) has resulted in interest in person centered planning within children’s services.

As a result of the Care Council’s QCF(W) work, a pilot project has been developed in North Wales to evaluate the impact of PCP within children’s residential services. This work will be developed by Prospects for Young People and Taith Ltd. The project will deliver PCP training for staff within a number of children’s homes. The PCP process will then be implemented for any children/young people who show an interest. Alongside this project, an evaluation will be conducted of the outcomes for children/young people and the benefits to the placement planning process. The results of this evaluation will then feed into a review of this guidance document in 2012/13.

The Visits to Children in Long-term Residential Care Regulations 2011. Sections 17 to 19 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) amend the Children Act 1989 (the 1989 Act) to strengthen local authorities’ duties to ensure the welfare of children is safeguarded and promoted when they are placed in health, education or other establishments for consecutive periods of three months or more.



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