

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

9 JANUARY 2023

**CASCADE: A GOOD PRACTICE CHARTER FOR SUPPORTING
PARENTS IN AND LEAVING CARE**

Reasons for the Report

1. To provide information to members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee on the development and of a good practice charter designed to strengthen support for parents in and leaving care.
2. The charter was developed by care-experienced parents and researchers at CASCADE, Cardiff University, in partnership with Voices from Care Cymru, NYAS Cymru and TGP Cymru.

Background to the charter

3. The need for strengthened policy and practice in relation to parents in and leaving care is supported by research.
4. A five-year study was conducted by Dr Louise Roberts (CASCADE, Cardiff University) and included:
 - a. Interviews with parents (retrospective and prospective)
 - b. Interviews with professionals from each of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales
 - c. LA survey data in respect of parents and their children

- d. Secondary analysis of existing national data sets in Wales, Wales Adoption Study and the School Health Research Network Survey.

5. The study found evidence of:

- a. Widespread stigma (e.g. parents' capacity to be parents is questioned because of their past experiences)
- b. Discriminatory practices (e.g. routine referral for pre-birth assessment)
- c. Underdeveloped and inconsistent support
- d. Concerning rates of separation between parents and children (e.g. the survey found 1 in 4 children were separated from both birth parents)

6. These research findings are not unique to Wales and similar evidence has been noted from international studies and reviews.

Development of the charter:

7. Following completion of the Welsh study, Dr Louise Roberts, Ms. Rachael Vaughan and Dr Dawn Mannay applied for funding to work with parents and supporting organisations with the aim of encouraging policy and practice change. Some positive developments were noted from the third sector such as the availability of peer support groups and NYAS' Project Unity service. However, the group believed there was opportunity to strengthen support from Corporate Parents.

8. The good practice charter was created over a series of sessions, facilitated with the support of Voices from Care Cymru and NYAS Cymru. The development of the charter was also supported by consultations with professionals from statutory and third sector agencies.

9. The charter considers the support that should be available from Corporate Parents:

- a. before young people become parents
- b. when they are expecting a child or parenting
- c. in the event concerns are raised about parenting

d. if parents and children are separated.

10. In addition, the charter makes an explicit commitment to challenge stigma and discrimination.

Further details and progress so far:

11. The charter and a range of supporting resources can be accessed via:

<https://www.exchangewales.org/supporting-parents-in-and-leaving-care-messages-to-corporate-parents/>

<https://www.exchangewales.org/cy/cefnogi-rhieni-mewn-gofal-ac-wrth-ei-adael-negeseuonirienicorfforaethol/>

12. The charter has been positively received in Wales. Supporting letters were received from the Welsh Government and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. To date, 21 of the 22 LAs in Wales have signed up to the charter or are actively engaged with the CASCADE team (this includes Cardiff).

13. The charter has also attracted attention from outside of Wales, including Australia, Italy, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. Harrow Council were the first to sign up and stated they would end the routine pre-birth assessment of parents: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/news/article/11002/leading-the-commitment-to-care-experienced-parents>

14. The progress of implementation of the charter and the changes made to services as a result will be updated to members of the Committee.

Financial Implications

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. There are likely to be financial implications arising if the Charter is adopted and the financial requirements (and their respective funding sources) would need to be considered and identified in the event of any further consideration of the Charter.

Legal Implications

16. There are no legal implications arising from this report

RECOMMENDATION

17. The Committee are recommended to note the development of the Good Practice Charter for Supporting Parents in and Leaving Care and suggest how they can promote this in their role as elected members.

**DEBORAH DRIFFIELD
DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
29 DECEMBER 2023**