

# Routine collection and publication of data of how many babies/children return to their care experienced parents care at the end of a Parent and Child Placement

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 16 Gorffennaf 2021  
Petitions Committee | 16 July 2021

Reference: SR21189-4

**Petition Number:** [P-06-1161](#)

**Petition title:** Routine collection and publication of data of how many babies/children return to their care experienced parents care at the end of a Parent and Child Placement

**Text of petition:**

We believe that many care leavers walk out of their placements because little thought is given to their previous experiences or to their mental wellbeing even though a baby has the right to stay with its parent/s if it is safe to do so.

Many care leavers have social services intervention, when they give birth. This is often due to their history and/or lack of their own parental guidance. These care leavers will undoubtedly have experienced trauma in their childhoods and often suffer from anxiety into their adult lives. They have often never felt safe in their homes as a child and having their own space has been their only safe haven where they are totally relaxed. Currently, if there is any concern, a parent is taken away from their home, family and friends then placed in a foster home or residential home to be assessed with little thought to the parents triggers and mental wellbeing. We believe that this often causes a roller coaster of emotions and parents then walk away from placements only to forever regret a rash decision made in a moment of anxiety that wouldn't have happened if the situation had been dealt with more empathically. We want to fact find to see if a better solution for parent and child is needed.



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## 1. Context

The petition refers to parents who themselves have been looked after by a local authority as children, who in turn go on to have social services interventions when they have their own children.

‘Looked after’ is the legal term for children who are being cared for by the local authority in a range of settings. If they meet certain criteria at a specified age, they become entitled to longer term support, up until the age of 25 in certain circumstances and are legally defined as ‘care leavers’. This terminology is reflected in the Welsh Government’s [published statistics](#)

Many people prefer the term ‘care experienced’ when referring to these two groups of children and young people. Where possible, this briefing uses ‘care experienced’ to reflect the wording of the petition.

### 1.1. What is a parent and child placement?

Local authorities sometimes place a child and a parent together into a time limited placement, in most cases to enable them to remain together while a parenting assessment and / or court proceedings are taking place. These placements are usually used for babies rather than older children and can be either as a foster placement or a residential placement, for example in a specialist parent and child unit. They can either be local authority placements or run by private providers.

A common scenario in which they are used is when a local authority has concerns about the welfare or safety of a child and applies to the court for a court order to intervene to seek to protect the child in a planned way or on an emergency basis. As part of these public law proceedings the court may directed for a residential parenting assessment to be undertaken.

Parenting capacity is a significant focus of the Framework for the Assessment of Children and their Families as set out in the [Code of practice for assessing the needs of individuals](#) issued under Section 145 of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).

### 1.2. Care experienced parents

Although data is not routinely published about the number of care experienced parents who have children removed from their care, there are concerns that care experienced parents are much more likely than the general population of parents to have their own children removed into the care of the local authority.

What happens to care experienced young people when they become parents is subject of several reports and research project such as the children of 'looked after' children study. It investigated the support provided to care experienced parents and what subsequently happened to their children. Of the eight looked after children and care leavers who were parents in Wales:

Thirty-one pregnancies were discussed during the interviews: 16 live births, two ongoing pregnancies, one stillbirth, one termination and 11 miscarriages. At the point of interview, two parents continued to care for their children, but six had experienced the permanent removal of their child/ren as a result of social services intervention. Twelve of the 16 children discussed in the interviews were 'looked after' or adopted.

The Wales care-leavers and their children placed for adoption study found that:

Young people in and leaving state care are more likely than the general population to become parents at a young age. Relatively little is known about the experiences and progress of care leaver parents and their children, but emerging evidence suggests an increased risk of intergenerational state intervention.

It drew on data from the Wales Adoption Study and found that 'more than a quarter (27%) of birth mothers and a fifth (19%) of birth fathers with children placed for adoption were themselves care leavers'.

It also referred to care experienced parents being 'distinguishable from other birth parents by their own experiences of abuse and neglect', going on to say:

Care leaver birth mothers were also more likely than their non-care leaver counterparts to have diagnosed mental health problems and were less likely to appeal the adoption plan. The profiles of children placed for adoption between care leaver and non-care leaver birth parents were similar.

A Nuffield Foundation study in England found that a high number of women who repeatedly appear before family courts and whose children are subsequently removed into public care or adoption have themselves been in care.

Court records showed that 40% of a sample of 354 mothers in repeat proceedings had been in foster care or children's homes themselves with a further 14% living in private or informal relationships away from their parents.

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## 2. Data collection and publication

Data on the number of ‘babies/children return to their care experienced parents care at the end of a Parent and Child Placement’, as referred to in the petition, is not published. There may be a number of agencies involved but primarily Local Authorities and CAF/CASS.

There is a range of data about care experienced children that is collected from local authorities and subsequently published by the Welsh Government.

Cafcass Cymru supports children and families in family court proceedings, advising the courts on the best course of action on what it considers to be in the best interests of individual children. The statistics it publishes are in its latest Annual Report 2019-20.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or amended to reflect subsequent changes.