



Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000¹ and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by those receiving education and training in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary, secondary, special and all age schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

¹ This act to be replaced by the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 when the quality provisions are commenced.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

Estyn welcomes the proposed revisions to Part 6 of the Code of Practice. We recognise that corporate parenting is both a statutory duty and a moral commitment, and national bodies such as Estyn have a vital role in holding systems to account for how well they deliver for care-experienced learners.

We also recognise the value of introducing the concept of community parenting, provided it is clearly defined as complementary to corporate parenting rather than a substitute. This could help engage wider networks of support around children and young people, while ensuring statutory accountability remains clear.

The proposed changes provide a stronger foundation for cross-agency responsibility. However, our inspection evidence shows outcomes for care-experienced children remain below those of their peers, with considerable variation across Wales. A sharper focus on education, well-being, placement stability, and consistent practice is needed if the code is to have real impact.

Crucially, there are strong links between being care-experienced and having additional learning needs (ALN). Estyn's recent thematic on ALN² highlighted weaknesses in Welsh-medium provision for learners with ALN. This raises a particular equity concern for care-experienced learners who may face a 'double disadvantage' if their ALN needs cannot be met through the medium of Welsh. The code could be strengthened by making explicit reference to this risk.

Key messages

² [Thematic report - The additional learning needs system - Estyn](#)

- Keep accountability clear – retain *corporate parenting* as the statutory descriptor; use *community parenting* only to describe the contribution of non-statutory partners.
- Strengthen the education focus – ensure the code prioritises educational progress, placement stability, and well-being, not just health and care outcomes.
- Guarantee consistency across Wales – set minimum expectations for PEP quality, professional training (trauma- and attachment-informed), and data collection.
- Measure progress more broadly – include well-being, learner voice, and long-term outcomes alongside attendance and attainment.
- Support care-experienced learners bilingually – require PEPs to record linguistic preference and ensure equitable access to Welsh-medium education and services. Address weaknesses in Welsh-medium ALN provision so that care-experienced learners with ALN are not doubly disadvantaged.
- Draw on emerging evidence – Estyn has been commissioned by Welsh Government to undertake a thematic review of outcomes for care-experienced children (report due next year). The findings should be used to strengthen future iterations of the code and provide practical guidance for improvement.

Consultation questions

Section1: preamble and chapters 1 and 2

Q1: Do you agree with the proposed additions and amendments to these sections of the code?

Yes

Estyn supports the proposed amendments. The strengthened emphasis on corporate parenting is welcome, as is the recognition of the role of a wide range of public bodies. The additions align with the Corporate Parenting Charter, which Estyn is committed to support. We particularly endorse the clearer articulation of duties across agencies, though we would encourage more explicit reference to monitoring progress in education, well-being, and placement stability.

We note the removal of the reference to the Welsh Government's 2019 strategy on the educational attainment of looked after children. While this is understandable given that the document is out of date, it is important that we continue to highlight education as a central element of corporate parenting responsibilities. We recommend that this section instead references current drivers such as the Curriculum for Wales, the framework on

embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being³ and Welsh Government's wider equity agenda.

In addition, Estyn has been requested by Welsh Government to undertake a thematic review of outcomes for care-experienced children, to be published next year. The findings from this work could usefully be drawn upon to strengthen future iterations of the code and ensure that it reflects the most up-to-date evidence on what works.

If no, please could you explain and what further amendments are needed?

Section 2: corporate parenting

Q2: What are your views on the term “community parenting”?

Estyn welcomes the distinction made between *corporate parenting* (statutory duties of local authorities and other public bodies) and *community parenting* (the wider contribution of those without statutory responsibility). The latter may be a helpful term to engage schools, voluntary organisations, and communities in recognising their role in supporting care-experienced children.

However, both terms must be communicated clearly and consistently. Corporate parenting should remain the unambiguous descriptor of statutory accountability, while community parenting can frame a more inclusive, child-centred message to the wider community.

Q3: What are your views on the proposals in this section of the chapter on corporate parenting panels or groups?

We support the development of corporate parenting panels/groups. Stronger multi-agency structures are needed to reduce inconsistency between local authorities.

Panels should include education, health, housing, and youth justice, with mechanisms to ensure children's voices are routinely captured and acted upon.

To avoid duplication, these panels must link directly to existing local safeguarding and well-being boards.

³ [Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing | GOV.WALES](#)

Q4: What are your views on the proposals for this section of the chapter? Is there anything missing?

Crucially, there are strong links between being care-experienced and having additional learning needs (ALN). Estyn's recent thematic on ALN highlighted weaknesses in Welsh-medium provision for learners with ALN. This raises a particular equity concern for care-experienced learners who may face a 'double disadvantage' if their ALN needs cannot be met through the medium of Welsh. The code should make explicit reference to this risk.

We welcome the proposals but believe two aspects need strengthening:

- Education must be consistently prioritised alongside health and care. Our evidence shows too much variation in how local authorities and schools support care-experienced learners, particularly around the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process.
- Minimum expectations should be set for training (e.g. trauma-informed and attachment-informed approaches) for professionals with corporate parenting responsibilities.

Q5: Do you think this information would be better located on a national or local platform? Please explain.

A national platform is preferable for consistency, transparency, and accountability.

Local flexibility is important, but without a central framework, practice will remain highly variable across Wales.

National-level guidance with local reporting responsibilities would provide both consistency and adaptability.

Q6: What do you think would be the most effective way of measuring progress in relation to corporate parenting?

Measuring progress in corporate parenting is complex because it goes beyond service deliver. To be effective, measurement should capture both quantitative indicators qualitative experiences – the voice of the child. In practice, the most effective systems often blend hard measures with lived experiences, ensuring that performance reporting is not just about ticking boxes but about capturing whether children and young people feel safe, supported, and able to thrive.

Estyn believes that the most effective approach would be a balanced framework that captures educational progress, well-being, placement stability, and learner voice.

At present, there is no single national measure of well-being in Wales, and this creates inconsistency. Many schools use different tools such as the PASS survey or the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, but there is no standardised expectation across the system.

We therefore recommend that Welsh Government:

- Develops or adopts a national well-being measure to provide consistency and comparability across local authorities and schools.
- Links corporate parenting duties to whole-school well-being approaches (for example, the *Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing*⁴ guidance).
- Requires reporting on broader progress indicators, such as stability of school placements, reduction in exclusions, learner aspirations, and post-16 pathways, to give a fuller picture of outcomes.

Section 3: chapter 4

Q7: Do you agree with the proposed additions and amendments to these sections of the code?

Yes

We agree with the proposed amendments, particularly the emphasis on multi-agency responsibility and transitions into adulthood.

The alignment with the 'When I am Ready' scheme is welcome, but further clarity on responsibilities for post-18 support is needed, given ongoing concerns about care leavers' education and employment.

If no, please could you explain what further amendments are needed?

Section 4: additional questions

⁴ [Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing | GOV.WALES](#)

Q8: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

During our inspections of independent schools, we continue to identify weaknesses in local authorities' monitoring of the quality of educational experiences and outcome the care experienced children who are funded by a local authority to attend an independent school. This aspect of corporate parenting could be further strengthened in the guidance.

Q9: Do you think that any of the proposals outlined in this document will have any unintended consequences? If so, please explain.

The main risk is confusion if the distinction between corporate parenting and community parenting is not communicated clearly.

There is also a risk of duplication of governance structures unless corporate parenting panels are carefully aligned with existing boards.

Q10: What are your views on the likely impact of the proposed changes to part 6 code of practice (corporate parenting) on groups of people, particularly those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010? What effects do you think there would be?

The changes should have a positive impact, provided implementation is robust. Care-experienced children already face multiple layers of disadvantage. A stronger code should reduce inequalities in access to education, healthcare, and safe housing.

It is vital that local authorities embed holistic approaches. For example, considering how disability, race, and sexual orientation interact with care status.

Children and young people will benefit from more consistent, developmentally appropriate involvement in decisions, while care leavers are likely to see improved transition planning into adulthood. For disabled children and those with ALN, the focus on preparation for moves and reviews, alongside clearer cross-agency duties, should reduce disruption and increase access to reasonable adjustments across education, health and housing.

The proposals also have potential to reduce inequalities experienced by groups with protected characteristics such as race, sex or disability, by embedding accountability across the whole system, not just children's services but also housing, education, health, transport and leisure.

Q11: We would like to know your views on the effects proposed changes to part 6 code of practice (corporate parenting) would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

We support strengthening the Welsh language dimension. Care-experienced children should have equal access to education and care placements through the medium of Welsh. Positive effects could be increased by:

- Requiring PEPs to record linguistic preference and provision.
- Ensuring foster carers and residential placements can access Welsh language support.
- Monitoring the impact of corporate parenting duties on Welsh-medium learners.

There are strong links between care-experienced children and additional learning needs (ALN). Estyn's thematic work on ALN found that Welsh-medium provision for ALN is inconsistent and, in some areas, weak. This has implications for equity: without targeted action, care-experienced children with ALN may face a 'double disadvantage' in securing appropriate Welsh-medium provision.

Strengthening the code to reflect this would help safeguard their rights and ensure the principle of treating Welsh no less favourably than English is realised in practice.