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**Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response**

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<b>Dyddiad / Date:</b>	01.12.25
<b>Pwnc / Subject:</b>	Personal education plans for children looked after: draft guidance for practitioners

**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 2000<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 draft new non-statutory guidance for local authorities schools and settings on initiating, developing and reviewing personal education plans (PEPs).

We recognise the value of introducing guidance that sets the context for local authorities to discharge their statutory duty under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to ensure that each child looked after should have a high-quality PEP until they have finished statutory education.

Estyn supports the drafting of non-statutory guidance intended to support local authorities and schools to make PEPs more meaningful and impactful for children looked after.

The proposed guidance provides a stronger foundation for cross-agency understanding on creating, reviewing, and improving PEPs.

There are strong links between being care-experienced and having additional learning needs (ALN). Estyn's recent thematic on ALN<sup>2</sup> 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, for example through PEP meetings and relevant documentation. The guidance could be strengthened by making explicit reference to this risk.

### **Key messages**

- Guarantee consistency across Wales – set minimum expectations for PEP quality, professional training (trauma- and attachment-informed), and data collection.

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<sup>2</sup> [Thematic report - The additional learning needs system - Estyn](#)

- 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 in 2026). The findings should be used to strengthen future practical guidance for improvement.

### **Consultation questions**

**Q1: Do you agree that the advice provided in the personal education plan (PEP) guidance will support local authorities, schools and settings to make the PEP process more meaningful and impactful for children looked after?**

**Neither agree nor disagree**

Estyn believes that the advice will provide information which makes the PEP process more meaningful. The PEP process map provides a clear and useful flow chart setting out the starting process for a PEP along with informative case studies of individual local authorities and experiences of care experienced children. However, the impact of this guidance will depend upon how clear and consistent the expectations are. Without national standards, there is a risk of variation and interpretation between local authorities, schools and other settings.

The guidance refers to several other documents related to local authorities' duties which should be read in conjunction with the proposed guidance, for example, The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children). This could further hinder local authorities, schools and settings in having clarity on expectations due to differing interpretations and varying access to information, therefore diluting the impact the proposed guidance could have.

The guidance mentions that PEP audit templates will be available when the final guidance document is published to aid local authorities to produce something similar. Without a national document to support with the quality assurance process of PEPs, then there is a risk of variation and different models emerging, potentially hindering effective evaluation of the quality and impact of PEPs across Wales for looked after children. We welcome a national template and approach to help bring consistency.

In addition, Estyn is undertaking 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 guidance and ensure that it reflects the most up-to-date evidence on what works.

**Q2: Do you agree that the guidance adequately covers everything needed to support local authorities, schools and settings to make PEPs more meaningful and impactful for children looked after?**

**Disagree**

Estyn does not agree that this guidance adequately covers everything needed to support local authorities, schools and settings to make PEPs more meaningful and impactful for children looked after.

This guidance could be strengthened by including the minimum expectations for what every PEP must include, how often it's reviewed, and how it captures the child's views.

A basic national framework could provide opportunity to reduce teacher workload, enable greater clarity for children moving between authorities, and help new Looked After Children Education (LACE) Co-ordinators understand and support quickly the children in their settings.

We recognise there is a need for some local flexibility, however practice will remain highly variable across Wales without a clear central framework for local authorities, schools and settings to work against. A national platform is preferable for consistency, transparency, and accountability, as well as reduced workload.

**Q3: If you disagreed with the statement in question 2, what else should be captured in the guidance?**

We believe that there is a need for greater focus on education within the guidance. The guidance would benefit from being strengthened to provide clarity on the educational role of the PEP. It therefore should include:

- How to effectively report on the tracking of progress and attendance and not just attainment.
- How to use the PEP more effectively to plan for transitions.
- How to promote the use of PEPs to enable more stable school placements, especially in the context of the disruption many looked after children have had to their education.
- How to link with ALN reviews where relevant to ensure that greater alignment is in place and that the right people are in the right place for the reviews. This would aid with meaningful and impactful outcomes for the young person.

**Q4: Do you agree that the guidance provides sufficient advice to local authorities, schools and settings on making the PEP process child-centred?****Disagree**

The guidance references the need for PEPs to be child-centred, however it would benefit from being strengthened to ensure there is clarity on what that looks like in practice. For example, it could provide a steer on how the child's voice is recorded and acted on, especially during reviews and transitions. Further, recognition on acknowledging the use

of Welsh language in the PEP process to ensure it is child-centred (where appropriate) would be beneficial.

Additionally, further guidance would be beneficial on how One Page Profiles can be shared and used effectively, particularly to aid in information sharing within meetings and aiding transition from one setting to another.

Finally, minimum expectations should be set for training (e.g. trauma-informed and attachment-informed approaches) for professionals with corporate parenting responsibilities which would further support the focus on being child-centred.

**Q5: Are there any other sources of support or resources that it might be useful to highlight in the guidance?**

**Comments:**

- Estyn's recent and upcoming thematic reports
- [Promoting the education of care experienced learners<sup>3</sup>](#)
- Whole-school approach to supporting pupils with additional learning needs (ALN)<sup>4</sup>
- Available national training or resources for foster carers and LACE teams
- Welsh-medium support materials from Coleg Cymraeg and others

**Q6: What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the guidance on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.**

**Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?**

Yes

**Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?**

Yes

Estyn welcomes opportunities to use and strengthen the use of the Welsh language. It is important that care-experienced children have equal access to education and care placements through the medium of Welsh. However, within this guidance there is limited

<sup>3</sup> Information available at [Thematic reports for 2025/26 - Estyn](#)

<sup>4</sup> Available at [Whole-school approach to supporting pupils with additional learning needs \(ALN\) - Estyn](#)

reference on supporting looked after children, their PEPs, meetings and documentation through the medium of Welsh or ensuring that the use of Welsh is promoted.

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

**Q7: In your opinion, could the guidance be formulated or changed so as to:**

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or**
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?**

**Yes**

We support the opportunities to use the Welsh language, however there is limited reference in this guidance on supporting looked after children through the medium of Welsh. Positive effects could be increased by:

- Requiring PEPs to record linguistic preference and provision. This is important both for Welsh-medium education and for compliance with the Welsh Language Measure.
- Ensuring foster carers and residential placements can access Welsh language support

There's potential for a positive impact if local authorities use the guidance to strengthen bilingual provision. Additionally, the guidance could be strengthened if it required bilingual PEP templates and that checks were made that Welsh-medium learners were properly supported.

**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:**

Relating to the collection of data and theme of accountability, we feel that it would be beneficial for PEP information to feed into local corporate parenting panels and inspection evidence rather than sit in isolation.

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. The opportunity to further strengthen awareness of looked after children in independent settings and strengthen the monitoring of local authorities on the quality of educational experiences and outcomes in the guidance would be welcomed.

**Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:**