

Safe and happy childhoods for all

Briefing: Care experience

Action for
Children

What's happening?

Every 15 minutes a child goes into care in the UK. They've already faced huge challenges in their young lives - challenges which no child deserves. Most will have experienced trauma, and over half will have suffered neglect and abuse.

A child in care will often experience lots of change. They're often separated from their siblings. They may have frequent changes in social worker, due to high staff turnover. They may have to move home over and over.

Without the stability and support they need, children and young people with care experience can find it hard to find and navigate opportunities to succeed.

Right now, care experienced young people are at greater chance of becoming homeless, struggling with poor mental health, or being caught up in the criminal justice system. They're too often let down by systems which are meant to help them, and expected to be independent before they're ready.

England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have all recently undertaken a review in children's social care. All reviews recommended radical reform and increased investment in the Children's Social Care systems in each nation.

Read our response for the reviews for: [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#).

In Wales, the Welsh Government has undertaken a radical reform programme which Action for Children in Wales is engaging with.

However, there has been very little progress with reforms since these reviews, and much more needs to be done to stabilise the current systems and create long-lasting change for the 107,317 children in care in the UK today.

A child in care deserves the same chance and opportunity that every child deserves. Improving the social care system is key to improving a large number of children's lives and their later life outcomes. It is vital that we get it right.



“Just because no one knows about us, it doesn't mean it's okay to turn a blind eye. This is the civil rights issues of the century. We deserve an equal chance to thrive.”

Young campaigner

What needs to change?

We are calling on the next UK government to reform the children's social care system to support children and young people to thrive through:

1. Capital investment to alleviate the care placement sufficiency crisis
2. National 'reunification' guidance to support more children to successfully return home from care
3. Targeted support for young people leaving care transitioning to independent living so they are not facing the hurdles of adulthood alone

What services do we offer?

Care experienced children and young people face many different challenges, both during their time in care and once they have left care. We offer a range of services to support them to thrive.

We provide:

9 family style children's homes,
for children and young people who have experienced neglect, abuse and trauma

19 fostering services,
helping hundreds of children find safe and loving foster homes

5 children's rights and advocacy services,
which support children and young people with care experience to navigate life and reach their full potential

“When you get to see your young person's true self shine through, you know it's all worthwhile.”

Seamus, foster carer with Action for Children.

Who are Action for Children?

Action for Children protects and supports vulnerable children and young people by providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

With 426 services across the UK, in schools and online, we helped 765,905 children, young people and families in 2022/23 alone.

Contact

If you would like any more information on our work or services, please get in touch: Rachel Allison, Public Affairs Manager, 07977825826, rachel.allison@actionforchildren.org.uk

Service Spotlight:

Independent Visitors Service

Action for Children's Independent Visitor Service matches adult volunteers with young people in care to be a friend, to listen to them and take an interest in their lives – without just being another professional.

Meeting them once a month, for a minimum of two years, Independent Visitors support a young person's interests, mentors them to make their own decisions, and acts as a positive influence.

Visits can be just going for a hot chocolate or a walk in the park, or it can be trying out new activities or going to new places – whatever the young person would like to do.

Briggit and Yvonne were matched when Briggit was just 9 years old and they are still meet up today, 20 years on.

“I think our relationship has grown more so like a mother and daughter because we've been in each other's lives for so long and she's just been there at like such pinnacle stages of my life.

Navigating life is hard but when you don't have that support system- you find yourself in the worst places. So I'm so thankful to have her in my life.”

Briggit, care experienced young person