

DRAFT

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2025 - 2028



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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our new **Corporate Parenting Strategy**, which reaffirms the responsibility we all share for the children and young people in our care. Every elected member, officer, and partner organisation has a role in keeping them safe, supporting their wellbeing, and helping them grow into confident, valued adults. Corporate parenting is not a task for one service—it is a commitment that reaches across our whole council.

At the heart of this Strategy are our **Care Experienced Young People**. Their resilience, honesty and achievements continue to inspire us. Many have faced difficulties no child should ever have to face, yet they show strength, talent and determination every day. We are proud of them, and we are grateful for the insight they bring in shaping our work.

This Strategy sets out our promise: to listen, to nurture ambition, and to stand alongside our young people as they build their futures. Together, we will strive to be the very best corporate parents we can be.

Councillor Ian Chandler

Monmouthshire County Council

Lead Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding & Accessible Health Services
and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Corporate Parenting Priorities

Priority 1: All elected members and officers understand and act on their responsibilities as corporate parents.

Priority 2: All children and young people who are looked after have a safe and stable home where they feel safe, valued and cared for.

Priority 3: Children who are looked by Monmouthshire County Council are cared for by Monmouthshire carers and remain close to their homes and communities.

Priority 4: Children and young people who are looked after enjoy a range of educational and learning opportunities and are supported to achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

Priority 5: Children and young people who are looked after enjoy the best possible health and have appropriate information, health care and advice to thrive.

Priority 6: Children and young people who are looked after enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Priority 7: As they grow older, children looked after are given timely, good quality support to prepare them for the future and into independence and enable them to make positive choices for independent living to become successful, fulfilled members of society.

Priority 8: Care Leavers are supported in education, training and employment and housing options.

Priority 9: Care Experienced children and young people are treated as valued members of the community, whose voices are heard, respected and taken into account in all decisions.

Priority 10: Care experienced children and young people are intrinsically involved in the development of practice and the wider service.

1. Our Vision

Monmouthshire Council is committed to supporting children to remain in the care of their families wherever possible, as we believe that this is usually the best place for children to thrive. We will provide effective support to help families remain together safely.

In some circumstances children need to be cared for by the Local Authority to ensure their safety and welfare. For these children the Council will provide care that meets their individual needs and promotes their sense of identity and family connection.

The council aims to develop a diverse range of placements designed to meet the unique and varying needs, and provide the right care and support, for each individual child or young person.

The Council wants children and young people to remain in their communities whenever possible, and for Monmouthshire children to be cared for within the county and within Wales. This allows children to experience the least disruption, maintain a sense of familiarity, have increased opportunities for time with family and friends, and preserve their Welsh identity.

The Council will promote partnership working to ensure that care experienced children and young people have access to education, training or work, health care, community activities, leisure and recreational opportunities.

The Council will endeavour to ensure that the experience of children and young people in care does not add to any disadvantage or loss they may have experienced and provides them with the stability and security they need to flourish and grow into successful adults. Care placements should provide opportunities to develop healthy relationships and develop skills and resilience so that children and young people can build positive futures and achieve their goals.

We believe that Corporate Parenting within MCC should be aligned to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). To reflect this, on 17th July 2024, Cabinet agreed to adopt the *Corporate Parenting Charter: A Promise for Wales* issued by Welsh Government in September 2023. The charter sets out a

number of principles and promises aligned to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and was co-designed with care experienced young people. Adopting the charter, commits the Council to working alongside care experienced young people in a way that helps to eradicate stigma; ensure care experienced children and young people have the same life chances as every other young person in Wales; nurtures their aspirations and ambitions and provides pathways to fulfilled and independent lives as adults.

<https://www.gov.wales/corporate-parenting-charter>

The Council recognises that the impact of having care experience can have a lifelong impact on people. Young People themselves tell us they continue to experience loneliness and isolation without the family networks and support that other people benefit from. In September 2024 Monmouthshire Council adopted certain measures to help care experienced people (i.e. anyone who has spent time in care when they were under 18 years old) overcome the disadvantages and discrimination they experience. These measures commit the council to:

- Assessing the impact of policy decisions on people with care experience.
- Expanding guaranteed job interviews to any individual with care experience.
- Including consideration of how to overcome the disadvantages and discrimination experienced by care experienced people when setting and reviewing the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives.

2. The Scope of Corporate Parenting

Child Looked After

This term refers to any child in Wales, under the age of 18, who is in the care of a local authority and provided accommodation for more than 24 hours. A Child Looked After may be a child who has been removed from their parents/carers for protection or placed voluntarily by parents due to family issues.

Care Leavers

The Corporate Parenting Strategy applies equally to young people leaving care as it does to children and young people who are looked after.

A Care Leaver is defined as a child who was previously a child who was Looked After Child and was in Care on their 16th birthday. Our duties to young people who are care leavers remain until they are 25. A young person can withdraw and re-connect to care and support at any time during this period.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Children and young people who arrive in Wales claiming asylum become children looked after and are included in our Children Looked After and Care Leaver population (when they turn 18).

Care Experienced Children and Young People

'Care Experienced' is the preferred descriptor by young people themselves for either a Child Looked After or a Care Leaver. We are committed to using this terminology wherever we can.

3.Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone within Monmouthshire County Council has a shared responsibility for Corporate Parenting. Elected Members and officers alike are expected to act in the best interests of care experienced children and young people and be aspirational for their futures. Corporate Parents have an important role to play in ensuring that every child / young person in their Council's care receives high quality care and support, such that they would be happy for their own children to receive.

Welsh Government defined the concept of corporate parenting as: *"The collective responsibility across services and across local authorities, to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children"*.

Councillors as Corporate Parents

"When you became an elected member you took on one of your most important roles, as corporate parent to children your local authority looks after. The



importance of your corporate parenting responsibilities cannot be overemphasised. Elected Members have a responsibility to ensure that children looked after by the Council are able to thrive, that they are nurtured, supported, educated, listened to and prepared for adult life in the way any good parent would want for their own children. These children will often have faced significant challenges and will need the help of adults who hold powerful and influential positions.” Gwenda Thomas AM

Key aspects of the role of County Councillors in their duties as Corporate Parents include:

- To know the key issues and concerns of our children and young people who are looked after and care leavers and to ensure that the Council is responding to these.
- Ensuring that parental responsibilities for children and young people who are looked after and care leavers are being fulfilled.
- To identify where things need to improve and have a positive impact on ensuring good outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
- To consider and question the impact of Council decisions on care experienced children and young people.
- To ensure that in their own personal conduct they act as champions for care experienced children and young people and do nothing that would cause jeopardy or harm to care experienced children or young people.

Officers of the Council

All officers employed within the Council share the responsibility to promote the needs of care experienced children and young people.

Key responsibilities of all officers are:

- To promote the life chances of care experienced children and young people particularly as it applies to their area of responsibility.
- To consider the impact of services / operational processes and practice on care experienced children and young people.

Corporate Parenting Panel

The Corporate Parenting Panel is the strategic, cross-party body responsible for ensuring that the council, together with its partners, acts as a "good parent" to all care experienced children and young people.

The panel's core function is to ensure that care experienced children and young people receive the same level of care, support, and protection that any good parent would provide.

Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- **Strategic Leadership:** Leading on the development, monitoring, and implementation of the council's corporate parenting strategy.
- **Involving and engaging with care experienced children and young people:** Actively listening and providing a direct, formal forum for care experienced children and young people to influence policies, share experiences, and challenge service design.
- **Advocacy & Representation:** Acting on behalf of care experienced children and young people, ensuring their needs are prioritised across the council.
- **Partner Coordination:** Ensuring cooperation between different parts of the Council and with external partners such as Health, Police, education providers, housing services, youth and play services, training and employment providers, and the voluntary sector.
- **Monitoring Performance:** Reviewing service data and performance reports from relevant service areas within the Council and from external partners and organisations with a focus on evaluating outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
- **Safeguarding Oversight:** Monitoring risks to care experienced children ensuring robust care and protection.
- **Supporting the Workforce including Foster Carers:** Listening to and responding to the needs of the workforce, ensuring that those working with care experienced children have the right opportunities and support to provide high quality care.

Current Membership

The Panel is chaired by the Lead Cabinet Member for Social Care and Safeguarding (Cllr Ian Chandler, Green) and other County Councillors are appointed to achieve political balance. The panel includes representation from Monmouthshire's foster carers. Aneurin Bevan Health Board Child Looked After Nurse is a standing member as is a representative from the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). Care experienced young people have an open invitation to attend.

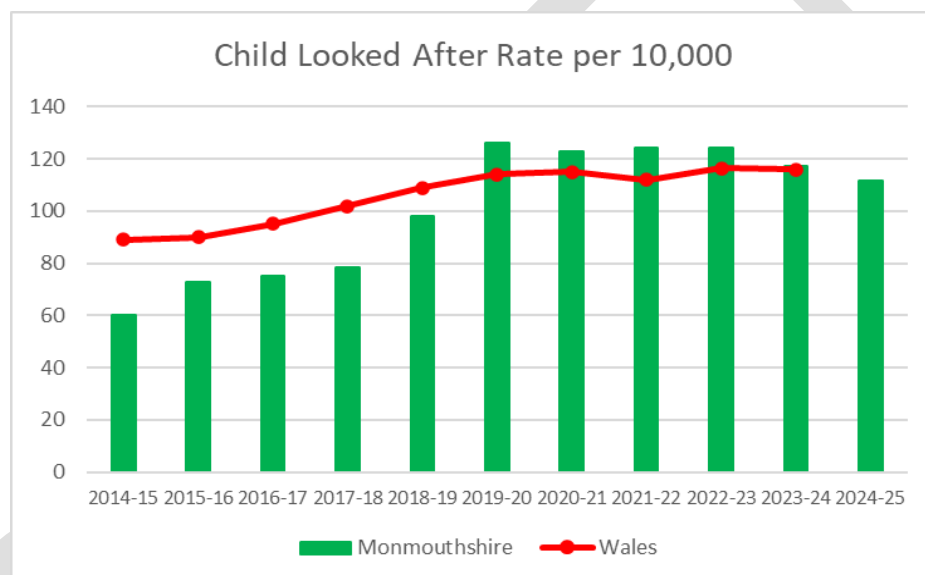
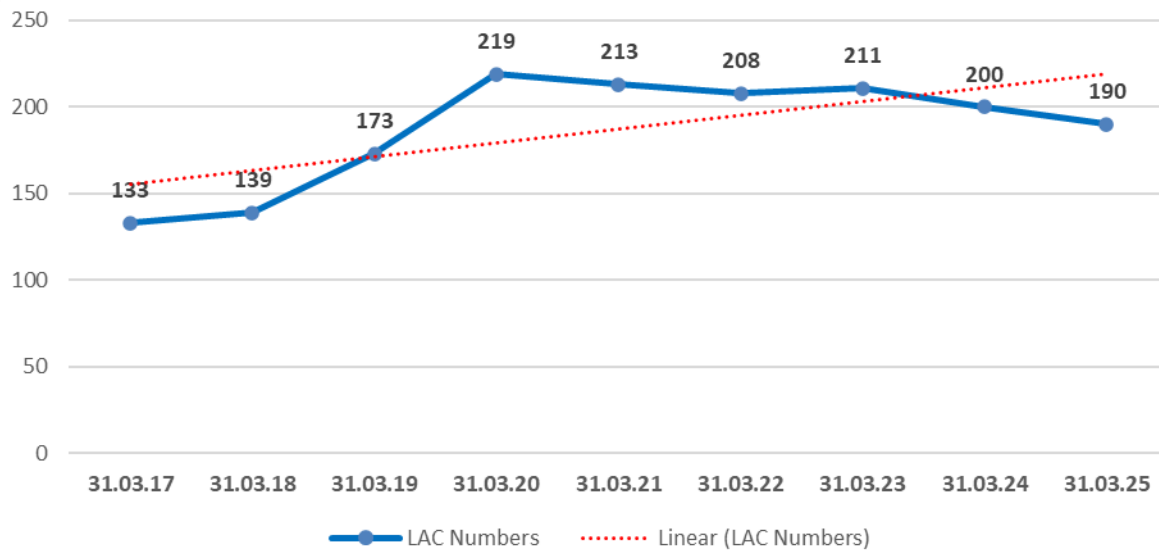
Current Elected Members and Officers of Panel are:

County Councillors	
County Councillor I Chandler (Green) Chair	
County Councillor A Sandles (Lab)	
County Councillor J. Strong (Lab)	
County Councillor P. Jones (Con)	
County Councillor M. Lane (Con)	
OFFICERS	
Morwenna Wagstaff, Head of Service (Inclusion)	
Ian Bakewell, Strategic Housing Manager	
Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services	
Wendy Barnard, Democratic Services Officer	
Jane Rodgers, Strategic Director, Social Care	
Louise Wilce, Inspire Co-Ordinator	
Jane Oates, Housing Options Manager	
Josh Klein, Youth and Community Team Manager	
Deb Jones, PA Care Leavers	
Mike Jones, PA Care Leavers	
Lindsay Dumbell, PA Care Leavers	
Ros McAteer, Senior Practitioner	
Charlotte Drury, Service Manager – Children's Services	

4. Number of children looked after

As at 31st March 2025 there were 190 Children Looked After 12 of whom were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The number of children looked after at this point in time had dropped below 200 for the first time in five years. The rate, of 112 children looked after per 10,000 child population in Monmouthshire, was below the most recently published average rate of Children Looked After across Wales in 2023/24.





5. The Changing Context

The strategy is developed on a 3-yearly basis which provides an opportunity to update on relevant issues and changes which affect care experienced children both at a local and a national level. The strategic, policy and operational context for corporate parenting is constantly evolving. Some of the key relevant issues are set out below.

The removal of profit from Children's Care

The Welsh Government has continued to work towards the removal of profit from the care of Children Looked After in Wales. This is now legislated for within the Health

and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025. The timeline for full implementation has been extended from 2027 to 2029/30, reflecting the complexity and challenges involved. It remains uncertain which private providers of residential and fostering placements will transition to a not-for-profit model or exit the market entirely. Additionally, the criteria for providers exempt from the Act is still unclear. These factors are contributing to significant disruption within the placement market, resulting in a scarcity of placements, increased costs for those available, and the risk that some children may need to move from placements where providers choose to withdraw.

Development of Residential Placements

The policy direction has also acted as a driver in the development of local authority in-house placements, particularly for residential and supported accommodation. Monmouthshire has capitalised on the opportunities this has presented, increasing its in-house provision through a placement development strategy (endorsed April 2024). The aim of this strategy is to achieve better outcomes for children and increased control over placement stability and care planning whilst securing better value for money.

Foster Care

There has been a national decline in the number of people seeking to foster children. This challenge is further compounded in Monmouthshire because of the size and demographic of the local population. The issues associated with the removal of profit is a further imperative to ensure increased in-house foster carers, as a significant number of foster carers working in Monmouthshire do so through for-profit organisations.

Foster Wales works alongside our in-house fostering service to explore alternative approaches to attract and recruit foster carers. The Council has taken measures to make in-house fostering more attractive – including uplifting the fees we pay; implementing a council tax reduction; providing discounted leisure charges; improving out of hours support and the level of communication between children's teams and foster carers.



The balance between new carers being recruited and the loss of carers through retirement or resignation has recently seen a positive uptick. The number of children placed with the Council's in-house foster carers over the last 6 years has risen steadily from a low of 25 as at 31.03.2018 to 46 as at 31.03.2025 which is a 77% increase. This has helped mitigate our reliance on IFA placements which has reduced from a high of 59 placements (as at 31.03.2020) to 48 placements (as at 31.03.2025).

Nevertheless, the Council is still overly reliant on IFA carers and longer-term, it is uncertain whether Monmouthshire will be able to recruit sufficient in-house foster carers to meet the demand for children to be placed with our own carers in a family setting.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Monmouthshire has a history of supporting young people who arrive in Wales fleeing oppression, exploitation, or war. The numbers of children and young people, whether arriving on their own (Spontaneous Arrivals) or directed to Monmouthshire via the government National Transfer Scheme, has increased over the last 3 years. The Local Authority has a duty toward these children and young people to find them homes and provide care and support for their diverse and often complex needs. This group of young people have diverse backgrounds, culture, religion, language, and experiences. They have a history of trauma and often no family known in the UK. Monmouthshire has committed to the development of in-house support and training for UASC, as well as developing networks and partnerships across Gwent. This allows us to learn more about the needs of the individual children and to ensure access to accommodation, language and translation services, meeting cultural and religious needs, and education and health services. A priority for these young people is the support and advice required to navigate the legal and immigration process to secure a decision about their future.

Family Support & The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After in Wales

Within its Programme for Government, the Welsh Government has committed to the safe reduction of the number of Children Looked After, with an emphasis on children remaining closer to their homes and communities. In response, Children's Services has incrementally developed and expanded its Family Support Services. This has



supported an overall gradual reduction in the number of Children Looked After from a mid-year high of 227 (including 2 UASC) in 2021 to 190 (including 12 UASC) in March 2025. The expansion of Family Support has helped to reduce the number of children subject to a Care Order who are placed with their parents (PWP) by the Court by 47% from a high of 55 (as at 31.03.2020) to 29 (as at 31.03.2024) and has supported more children looked after to achieve safe rehabilitation with their families.

Homelessness legislation

People with care experience face increased risk of homelessness during the course of their lifetimes than the general population. In recent years the Council has placed increasing emphasis on reducing homelessness and increasing its supply of temporary as well as permanent housing solutions.

There are impending legislation changes as laid out in the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill. Initial proposals in the Bill, which is due to be put before the Senedd early 2026, includes amendments to the Social Care and Wellbeing 2014 Act and will significantly impact on how the authority manages those leaving care. Headline proposals include:

- Prohibiting the use of the homelessness system as a default for those leaving care.
- Requirement for a joint protocol between housing and social care to more effectively support care leavers and 16–17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- An intention to amend the Suitability Order (2015) to make it explicitly clear that unsupported accommodation is unsuitable accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.

Following scrutiny of the Bill by the Local Government and Housing Committee a recommendation was given that “the Welsh Government should assess the case for extending provisions aimed at care leavers in future, so that they apply to all up to the age of 25, not just those in education or training. This includes the duty to ensure that suitable accommodation is available for care leavers”.



Children's Services and Housing colleagues are working jointly to plan for how we respond effectively to any legislative changes and improve our ability to achieve stable homes for care experienced people. The development of 16+ provisions is assisting with this, but there is still a shortage of move-on accommodation that needs to be addressed.

Children's Changing Needs

Although on the surface the number of children in care appears relatively stable, beneath this there is increased movement with more children becoming looked after, and ceasing to be looked after than previously, when the cohort of Children Looked After was more static. During the year 2024 – 2025, 60 children entered care, and 70 children left care. Of these 70 children, 23 left care by virtue of turning 18. The service supported 47 children to leave care through developing an alternative pathway for them, drawing on the close working between social workers and family support services. During 2024/25, 11 children were supported to return to their families (5 following discharge of an interim care orders); 27 children were supported to be placed with Special Guardians and 9 children were adopted.

This movement of children is enabled because the service is working differently to manage risks within the community and support family placements, increasing the numbers of children who can safely exit care and ultimately to the discharge of statutory orders. This means that the children who do remain in care for a longer period are often those with more complex needs and / or who have extremely limited family support.

At the same time, Children's Services is seeing an increase in the complexity of needs and risk presentations within the children and families that are referred. This trend has been further exacerbated since the 2020–22 pandemic with social, emotional and psychological / mental health issues becoming more prominent as well as acrimonious family breakdown and challenges in family functioning. The number of applications to the Family Court has not reduced despite significant levels of support services aimed at diverting families from this step. Equally, for children who do go on to require long-term care from the Local Authority, this heightened



complexity often creates challenges in securing stable placements that can meet their needs.

Workforce

The importance of supporting a stable workforce is critical for the Council to deliver its corporate parenting responsibilities effectively. Within Children's Services, the Long-Term Support Team works with children who are Looked After and Care Leavers. Since the last strategy, there has been significant instability in the Long-Term Support Team with a number of changes at Team Manager, Senior Practitioner and Social Work level. This has resulted in some disruption to the team's ability to focus on service improvement and practice development. The team is now benefitting from an experienced team manager who has been able to bring increased stability and direction to the team. Ensuring a well-trained and stable workforce is a critical factor for care experienced children who value the trusting relationship that a long-term social worker can provide.

Recently there has been a renewed focus on the 14+ population of children looked after with an extensive Action Plan in place to address and improve practice regarding statutory compliance and quality assurance. The intention is for this plan to support improvements in how we support children's pathways to independence including manage finances; as well as extending children's participation, engagement and recognition of achievements.

Financial & Budgetary Context

There continue to be significant budgetary pressures across the Local Authority, public services, and the third sector, which affect inward investment in services that support care experienced children and young people, their carers and families. These financial constraints create both challenges and opportunities and require us to review and evaluation our service delivery models and collaborative relationships. We have made good use of partnership funding to support the development of in-house children's residential provision.

Equally, the Council is benefitting from a number of Welsh Government grants



including Families First, Regional Integration Fund and Radical Reform, the majority of which we have turned to developing our Family Support offer. Whilst it is positive that we have been able to maximise these opportunities, grants create uncertainty for the workforce; service planning and future provision. Wherever possible we have used savings achieved through active care planning and placement development to re-invest in services (foster carers and family support for example).

6. Key Achievements in 2022 –25 and Next Steps

Placement Sufficiency

- Monmouthshire's Fostering Recruitment Strategy provides a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to fostering recruitment which has resulted in a steady increase in foster carers. (Priority 2 & 3)
- In March 2025 Monmouthshire Council increased the financial offer to in-house Foster Carer to be more aligned with the regional position and in recognition of the valuable service provided by our Foster Carers. (Priority 2 & 3)
- In May 2024, the Lead Cabinet Member agreed a 30% Council Tax reduction for Monmouthshire Foster Carers supporting both the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. This has led directly to the recruitment of at least two fostering households and an additional four placements in 2025/26. (Priority 2 & 3)
- Over the period successful recruitment of carers has marginally outstripped the number of Carers retiring or resigning. Consequently, the number of in-house foster carers numbers has remained stable with a small overall increase of Foster Caring households from 37 at year end 2023 to 41 at year end 2025. At the same time, improvements in the support we offer to carers and how we match children has ensured a steady increase in the use of in-house Foster Carer placements, with 46 children being placed with in-house foster carers at year end 2025. (Priority 2 & 3)
- It is anticipated that the target of recruiting 10 new foster carers will be met in 2025/26; however, the previous two years targets were not met, meaning that recruitment and retention activity remains a critical priority. (Priority 2 & 3)



- In January 2024 Monmouthshire Council signed the Foster Carer's Charter. This document defines the relationship between fostering services, local authorities, and carers. It aims to ensure carers are treated as skilled professionals, respected, and supported, enabling them to provide optimal care for children. Key principles include inclusion in decision-making, access to training, support, and fair treatment. (Priority 2 & 3)
- In April 2024, the Council endorsed an approach to developing 'in-house' residential and 16+ supported accommodation for care experienced children. (Priority 2, 3, 7 & 8)
- In May 2025 Monmouthshire opened its first in-house registered Residential Children's home in Monmouth. The development of this home, together with our existing 2-bed therapeutic provision, has led to a reduction in the reliance of "for -profit" private residential home placements. Although early days, the home is delivering better outcomes for children. The Independent Reviewing Officer's Quality Assurance report of December 2025 reported that all children in the Monmouth residential home were positive, felt secure and were happy they had moved to this provision. (Priority 2 & 3)
- In November 2024 Monmouthshire opened its first 16+ Supported Accommodation, a 4-bedroom home in Caldicot. This provision supports the Council's commitment to care experienced young people having the appropriate support to develop the skills and knowledge that they will need as they become adults and move into independent living. The provision has also allowed a pathway for young people who are in out-of-county residential care to return to Monmouthshire in order to develop the support networks they will require when they are 18. The provision further contributed to reduction in the Council's reliance on for profit, out of county placements. (Priority 3, 7 & 8)
- For UASC young people over 16, Children Services has worked with a private landlord to develop suitable housing options. This has enabled young people to have their cultural, religious and community needs met, as well as being able to access appropriate health care and education. (Priority 5, 6 & 8)

2025-28 Next Steps



- Further development of pathways and partnerships with Adult Services, Housing Services, Registered Social Landlords, private providers and new home builders to consider the housing needs of 18+ Care Experienced young people. This is to ensure that suitable move-on accommodation is available to care experienced young people ready to increase their independence take on their own tenancies.
- The completion of 3 further Residential Care Homes due to open in 2026.
- The completion of 2 further 16+ Supported Living homes to expand the suite of options for children's differing support needs in transitioning to a life outside of formal care and into adulthood.
- Continued programme of Recruitment events and campaigns for In House Foster Carers, and engagement with the 4C's and Welsh Government in relation to the potential transfer of carers from for-profit organisations.
- Expansion of both the Monmouthshire Fostering Business programme and the Fostering Family approach to support In House Foster Carers.

Family Care and Family Networks

Since the last strategy, the Council has expanded and enhanced its suite of Family Support services aimed at supporting children to remain in or return to parental or family care. These services work with the statutory Children Services teams to undertake targeted direct work to help identify and mitigate the risks which may prevent a child remained at, or returning, home. This includes:

- Evolution of the work undertaken by the Families Together Team who now work with families and children who Looked After and within a Court process to secure Special Guardianship Orders at the final hearing in court. This diverts children from being either residential or foster care into family care. (Priority 2 & 3)
- Development of Family Reconnect Support Service where targeted longer-term support helps address both current and historical risk and concerns. This enables Children Looked After to re-engage in safe contact with families, work toward rehabilitation to parental or family care, or to expand safe support



networks for young people who will help sustain them as Care Leavers.

(Priority 2, 3 & 7)

- The development of Family Resolutions service which works holistically with children and families experiencing interfamilial conflict, domestic abuse and parental alienation. This is a service offering intensive directed intervention informing Social Work assessments and enabling children to return safely to, or remain in, parental care. (Priority 2 & 3)
- The development of the Out of Hours supervision service provides oversight to children who require enhanced monitoring outside of office hours. The work helps to manage risk and informs Social Work assessments. This service is key to understanding and ensuring children returning to or remaining in parental care are safeguarded, and supports safe rehabilitation. (Priority 2 & 3)

Next Steps

- Continue to evaluate the role and remit of Family Support services as the demographic of children looked after changes, recognising the increased complexity of children's needs. Continue to evaluate the family outcomes achieved.
- Advocate for permanent core funding for Family Support posts to increase workforce stability.

Participation and Engagement

- A programme of practice change has increased the quality of care planning for Children Looked After with an emphasis on exploring the potential for rehabilitation to family care, or to less intensive / more local care provision. Pathway Planning processes for children who are 15+ has been refreshed (with the involvement of young people). This has supported practitioners and young people to work together in planning for independence and post care options. Pathway Plans are reviewed and amended with the young person up to the age of 21 or 25 if the young person is in education or training. (Priority 7 & 8))
- The Corporate Parenting Panel has continued to meet twice yearly (as a minimum) with Care Leavers to hear their views on topics which are relevant

to them including experiences in foster or residential care, accommodation and housing, apprenticeships, finances as well as the barriers and challenges they experience in everyday life. (Priority 9 & 10)

- 100% of Children Looked After Reviews are held in timescale, and these are held in a range of venues which facilitate the attendance of the child. All children have an opportunity to speak with an advocate or with the Independent Reviewing Officer and recent data shows that 75% of children are invited to attend their Child Looked After review meetings (dependant on age/circumstances) with 62% of those Children Looked After then attending their review meetings. (Priority 9)
- A Young People's panel has been established which has ensured participation in the recruitment of key posts, and the development of both Residential and Supported Accommodation provisions. (Priority 10)
- Since 2024 there has been a programme of "Coffee and Catch" up meetings between Foster Carers and Children Services Leadership Team held quarterly across Monmouthshire allowing foster carers to raise issues relevant to them and to contribute their views to service development. In keeping with the Foster Care Charter, this compliments the Fostering Proactive Partnership group (Foster Carers and key operational staff from Children Services) to support the development of processes and procedures, as well as improving understanding and relationships. (Priority 2 & 3)

Next Steps:

- Embed and monitor the participation and action plans in the Long-Term Support Team to drive service improvements for Care Experienced young people.
- Review the use of advocates and advocacy services to prepare for the regional tendering process which commences in 2026.
- Development corporate parenting engagement events and devised a more robust appreciation event programme for Care Experienced Children & Young People

Health and Education:



- The Vulnerable Learners Lead in the Education Inclusion Service has driven change in the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP) working with both operational Children's Services and individual schools to improve compliance, children's participation, and quality of plans for Children Looked After who have Additional Learning Needs. There has been a year-on-year improvement in the number PEP's completed. The target is to achieve 96% completion of PEPs on children's files in early 2026. The Vulnerable Learner Lead tracks all care experienced children and young people's education needs up to the age of 16 when they are monitored through the "Teir Data" and Keeping in Touch Service. (Priority 4)
- Monmouthshire has a current 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) Prevention Strategy in place, supported by robust monitoring systems for children up to age 16 followed by a partnership-based monitoring approach up to age 18. The NEET Prevention Team (Inspire) is well-embedded and available to support any young person at risk of becoming NEET or already identified as such. Young Person Advisers within Children's Services are part of the Keeping in Touch partnership and contribute to the monitoring and support of 16–18-year-old NEET care experienced young people. (Priority 4, 7 & 8)
- Where possible we continue to support care experienced young people with additional grant money to support their independence such as learning to drive or accessing training. (Priority 6).
- Care Experienced young people continue to tell us that they feel frustrated and limited in terms of being able to progress into meaningful employment. Some young people experience 'negative' financial impacts of working because of the way that the benefit system works.
- There has been significant staff turnover of personnel within the Child Looked After Nursing Service which has led to increased delay of children's health reviews being undertaken. This has resulted in a 10-month backlog of Health assessments for approximately 76 children and care leavers. Health has responded with a regional approach to manage the backlog across Gwent. Progress on this is being monitored by Monmouthshire's IRO. (Priority 5)



- The BASE service, a partnership between the Local Authority and Health, continues to support the emotional and psychological wellbeing of Care Experienced children and young people and their carers. Between 2024/25 BASE delivered 63 consultations relating to 49 children and 27 Professional Network Meetings were held. 24 children received direct work including 315 therapy sessions, 245 Play Therapy sessions and 70 Psychology sessions. Demand for consultations increased over the last year in keeping with the rising complexity of children's needs. BASE plays a critical role in support placement stability and providing essential specialised support for carers. (Priority 2 & 5)

Next Steps:

- Maintenance the progress achieved in timeliness and quality of Personal Education Plans with increased young person engagement and contribution to the PEP process. Assure the quality and impact of the PEPs completed.
- Extend access to Apprenticeship opportunities for Care Experienced young people.
- Continue to monitor and provide additional opportunities for care experienced young people to improve their skills, resilience and independence using available grants.

7. Implementation and Evaluation

The Corporate Parenting Strategy includes a high-level action plan to support the delivery of its core aims. Measures have been put in place where possible, so that there is an evidence base through which progress can be monitored. Delivery against the action plan will be monitored by Corporate Parenting Panel on a 6-monthly basis. The Corporate Parenting Panel will present a mid-point report to Full Council on progress.

For the current strategy we have aimed to focus on the actions where corporate parenting work can bring added value to the work that is on-going within the services. A revised set of actions is at appendix 1a and a review of previous action plan is at appendix 1b.



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