

**A  
NATIONAL  
VOICE**



**The Independent  
Care Review**



**Children and young people's response to the  
final report of the Independent Review of  
Children's Social Care**



# Context

The Independent Care Review for Children's Social care was set up by Government to look at how the care system could improve. It published its final report in May 2022 and the Government is now looking at taking forward recommendations.

Following the launch of the review, our A National Voice Ambassadors (a group of care experienced young people from across England) supported to give children in care and care leavers a voice in the review. They developed workshops and a survey for young people to have a say.

Over 300 children and young people took part and several important themes emerged, including: a postcode lottery, cliff edges in care, systems that don't work for children and young people and the importance of positive language.

## Services designed for us

Develop services that work for you, that you can understand, rather than ones designed for and by adults.

## The same support wherever we are

Provide a clearer and fairer system without a postcode lottery of care.

## Support us to grow

Good care is where you feel safe, supported and have fun.

## The best professionals for us

Good relationships with professionals is key to making your care experience good.

Read the [summary and full report](#) or watch on [YouTube](#)

Following the launch of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Report in May 2022, we invited our A National Voice Ambassadors and A National Voice Network (children in care councils, care leaver forums and participations groups) to express their views on the report recommendations and discuss the implications for the future.

We held an online session with A National Voice Network and Ambassadors where we were joined by members of the Independent Care Review Team to answer questions and listen to views about the recommendations. We also held separate sessions with ANV Ambassadors to explore the recommendations.

In total we consulted 78 children and young people aged 11-25.

We asked, what children and young people **welcome, worry and wonder** about the recommendations. To find out what they said, take a look on the next page.

# I welcome: What sounds good and would help us



There is much that children and young people welcome about the review recommendations. A National Voice (ANV) feel that it would be particularly important for the Government to make sure these are put in place:

- ANV are pleased that listening to the children's voices is highlighted throughout the review and that it recommends this should continue when implementing the review recommendations.
- ANV welcome the focus on early help, help for families to stay together and making good use of family networks.
- ANV support better communication between the different services working with individual young people and protecting young people from stigma and discrimination.
- ANV welcome the focus on funding which would mean there would be more opportunities to be able to help people, as no matter what you end up doing you will always require funding.
- ANV feel it is good that the review discusses how social workers will support children and young people in the future. It is good that there is a focus on how to support social workers and continuity of workers.
- ANV welcome that informal relationships were mentioned and the suggestion of more Independent Visitors.
- ANV support the opt-out system of advocates.
- ANV are pleased to see mental health and wellbeing within the recommendations and the proposal that Corporate Parenting responsibilities are extended and will include the NHS.
- ANV welcome Staying Put with foster carers for longer – we feel it is good that the age for this has been raised.



## I worry: what doesn't sound good and wouldn't help us



Despite the positives within the report, ANV worry about some aspects and more action is needed to support in some areas. ANV feel that some recommendations need to be carefully considered and will require more discussions with children and young people before they happen:

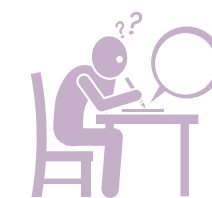
- ANV worry that children and young people in residential care could lose out - for example how would delegated responsibility work in a children's home?
- ANV feel that there needs to be more planning when looking at Staying Put and that this planning should happen earlier.
- ANV feel that plans for the national recruitment of Foster carers needs planning to ensure that they understand children's needs and think about them first.
- ANV worry that children and young people might not be consulted on whether it is right for them to stay with their parents. ANV feel that children and young people need the situation explained properly and to have the option to say how they feel.
- ANV feel that the suggestion to remove the IRO is a little concerning and want an explanation of the thinking behind this.
- ANV worry that children across the county are still not aware of their rights and entitlements and may not necessarily understand how reviews such as this will affect them. There is an assumption that we know our options and rights – this isn't the case. There needs to be more information available and options explained.
- ANV recognise that some recommendations require a shift in trust, this worries some young people because they feel what doesn't help is when the wrong people get trust and let down everyone else.

## I worry: what doesn't sound good and wouldn't help us



- ANV worry that funding could be wasted and feel it is important to make sure that all expenditure is essential.
- ANV worry about the lack of funding for children in care councils because they are so underrated but a real lifeline. They are our advocates.
- One of ANV's worries is that a lot of local authorities may identify with some of the suggestions made in the review but the changes might just get added to the list of unexecuted actions.
- ANV worry that recommendations haven't spoken about support for late entrants into care, older children – this will still happen for some, despite early intervention, and is a different experience. Generally most of the recommendations are focused on younger children and is missing the point when it comes to older children coming into care. It can disrupt education and other key milestones and needs a different approach and support.
- Although free prescriptions are welcomed by ANV, eye tests and dentists are also expensive and should be considered to be included in support.
- ANV are also concerned that there is not much reference to seeing brothers and sisters and how this should happen, including when they are adopted.
- ANV worry that children and young people will not get the right mental health support. ANV want there to be a range of support to meet different needs, not just CAMHS.
- More pressing to ANV, there is nothing in the recommendations about the cost of living or care leavers living in poverty. This situation will get worse and action is needed. Although ANV welcome the increase in setting up home allowance, ANV worry that it will not cover the basics (Incl. all white goods, carpet, council tax, phone/internet bills, water rates, gas/electricity).

## I wonder: Things I am unsure about or would like to know more about?



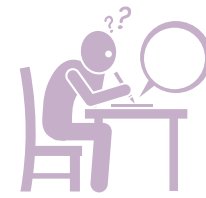
ANV feel that there are more questions about how some of the recommendations will be achieved. The Government should try to answer these questions:

- ANV wonder, if we have known the problems in the care system why haven't we approached this before?
- What is actually going to happen or will the recommendations get watered down?
- ANV wonder how you will make sure all local authorities will keep to the suggestions whilst keeping young peoples voices in mind? How will local authorities get involved and be accountable for making these changes? Why will it take two years to put these recommendations in place?
- ANV wonder how you will ensure children are able to opt in for an advocate? There is concern that young peoples voices will go under the radar at looked after children reviews without the IRO and they felt that it was unclear who would make sure that the young person had an advocate as the IRO often does this. Instead ANV wonder if the IRO role should be tweaked rather than removed for example by making them more independent. ANV also wondered what would happen if you opt out of advocacy and then change your mind?
- ANV would like more detail on how you will protect care experienced people from stigma and discrimination? How will stigma be challenged? ANV wonder how they will stop being singled out as different from other children and young people in education and in the work place?
- And which organisations will support care leavers to move on after they have reached the age of 25?





## I wonder: Things I am unsure about or would like to know more about?



- The Life Long Guardianship scheme seems interesting – how will you make this work? Will this be legally binding forever or can young people opt out at any point?
- ANV wonder how can you ensure the 9,000 foster carers are the right ones being recruited? How will you monitor that they are here for the right reasons? How will you make sure that the foster carers are well trained? Will children in care and care experienced people be involved in foster carer training?
- ANV feel pleased to see that jobs and more apprenticeships are to be developed but wonder what is considered to be ‘well paid’?
- None of the recommendations focus on the benefits system, it’s unfit to work with care leavers, but the review doesn’t address this. How will this be addressed?
- There is also little in the recommendations about participation. Children in care councils, voice in services and strategic plans, young people's voice in training of carers and professionals seems to be lacking generally in the recommendations. What will be done to make sure they are covered in implementation plans?



# Next Steps

In May 2022 when the independent review of children's social care published its final report the Government announced its plans to publish an implementation strategy on children's social care before the end of 2022.

ANV believe that children and young people with care experience should continue to be involved in the implementation of the recommendations and ask the Government to set out how they plan to involve children and young people as part of their upcoming implementation strategy.

ANV believe that Children in Care Councils are best placed to support the development of local changes to services and hope that the Government recognise the ANV network as a place to continue to talk to children in care and care leavers.

ANV hope that this report will be essential reading, not only to everyone involved in the Implementation Board, but to anyone who is responsible for designing or changing children's social care system in England.

ANV's ask to Government is clear: Implement the things we welcome, do not move forward with the things we worry about without talking to us more about these issues.

**If you wish to get in contact with A National Voice you can:**



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