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Press release

For immediate release

### **Independent provider alliance responds to NAO report on children in care**

The Children's Services Development Group (CSDG) has welcomed the publication of the National Audit Office's report on children in care as a positive addition to the ongoing debate on improving children's services commissioning. However, it is vital that independent providers, who often provide highly specialist care, are not unfairly seen as being the more costly option.

CSDG spokesperson Marc Woolfson said: "*CSDG welcomes the general conclusions of the NAO's report. For too long looked-after children have suffered disproportionately from poor educational attainment levels and outcomes in later life. This is exacerbated by multiple placements and the emotional instability this can cause.*

*It is clear from the NAO's findings that it is not possible to draw conclusions about the cost of independent children's services provision as there is no framework to enable like-for-like cost comparisons to be made with local authority provision. As the NAO states, more children with complex needs and disabilities are coming into care and these children often require highly specialist support. This can have a higher associated cost due to the complex nature of the specialised care required. It is this type of care that CSDG members provide and we work hard to ensure that this is a high quality service offered at the best possible value.*

*CSDG welcomes that the NAO has highlighted the need to ensure children are in the right placement first time and to move away from commissioning children's placements based only on short-term affordability. This was a key feature of CSDG's recent joint report 'Collaborating for better outcomes' which recommended that commissioners should look at the whole-life costs for a looked-after child, looking at a long term care plan and eventual transition into independence as well as immediate needs.*

*The NAO also rightly states that the government needs to improve its measurement of the efficacy of the care system. CSDG has called for the need for improved outcome indicators through the introduction of a National Outcomes Framework. This would improve benchmarking of providers and ensure both providers and commissioners understand what quality, good value services look like.*

*Commissioners face huge challenges in effectively commissioning children's services at a time of funding cuts and increased demand for services. CSDG is a strong proponent of the need for providers and commissioners to work together to make improvements to commissioning and to address the issues raised by the NAO. We are committed to working with the government, commissioners and other providers to make these changes, ultimately with the aim of improving outcomes for the vulnerable children in our care."*

**ENDS**

Notes to Editors:

1. For more information, please contact Rebecca Brake at [rebeccabrake@westminsteradvisers.co.uk](mailto:rebeccabrake@westminsteradvisers.co.uk) or on 0203 102 3621.
2. [CSDG](#) is an alliance of independent providers of care and specialist education services for children and young people with complex needs. Members include Acorn Care & Education, Foster Care Associates, National Fostering Agency, Options Group, Priory Group, SENAD Group and Witherslack Group.

3. To see the report, *Collaborating for better outcomes: final report form the Children's Services Taskforce*, please use this link on CSDG's [website](#).