

13th January 2015

Press release



For immediate release

Independent provider alliance responds to Public Accounts Committee inquiry into children in care

The Children's Services Development Group (CSDG) has welcomed the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into the findings of the National Audit Office's report on children in care and the issues raised during the Committee's evidence session yesterday (12th January).

CSDG spokesperson Lizzie Wills said: *"CSDG welcomes the PAC inquiry into children in care following the revelations in the NAO's report. The report highlighted that outcomes and placement stability for looked-after children have not improved in excess of five years. For too long looked-after children (LAC) have suffered from poor educational attainment and outcomes in later life. This is exacerbated by multiple placements and the emotional instability this can cause.*

It is clear from the evidence given yesterday by senior officials in the Department for Education and Ofsted, that the lines of accountability for our most vulnerable children remain unclear. Senior representatives "passed around" responsibility for ensuring placement stability and positive outcomes, revealing an overwhelming and fundamental lack of coherence in the care system for LAC.

The NAO's report rightly highlighted that the government needs to improve the measurement of the efficacy of the care system, a view echoed by DfE officials and MPs yesterday. Outcome indicators must urgently be established for fostering and residential care, as they are for adoption. CSDG has consistently called for the introduction of a National Outcomes Framework, so that all providers, including local authorities' in-house services, can be benchmarked by independent commissioners. This would better inform the understanding of what quality, good value services look like and ensure children are placed in the best possible, and most appropriate setting to meet their needs.

Despite the DfE being supplied, at their request, with considerable and wide-ranging data sets on looked-after children and types of provision, this information is not used to reform the commissioning of children's services. It is clear that due to a lack of accountability and poor mechanisms through which to benchmark provision on cost, quality, and outcomes, this unacceptable situation will continue to endure.

Commissioners face enormous challenges in effectively commissioning children's services at times 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 Jessica March at jessicamarch@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 CSDG's most recent report, which called for the introduction of a National Outcomes Framework, *Collaborating for better outcomes: final report form the Children's Services Taskforce*, please use this link on CSDG's [website](#). This report was published jointly with the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU).