

CSDG response to proposed care reforms – 02/09/13

The Children's Services Development Group (CSDG), a policy coalition of leading independent providers of specialist services for looked-after children, welcomes the changes to the regulation of children's homes and out-of-area placements the Government is currently consulting on, but are concerned that the narrow focus of the proposed changes will not be effective in ensuring that the system protects vulnerable children and acts in their best interests.

Speaking on behalf of CSDG, Brian Durham, Managing Director of Young Foundations, said, *"We welcome the intentions of the Government's proposals, but all children should have safe, effective care whether in fostering, kinship care or children's homes, and whether placed in- or out-of-area. Many children at risk of abuse and exploitation will still be living with their birth families and these changes do little to safeguard them.*

Better communication between agencies is extremely important, but changes to regulation must be complemented with effective implementation and better strategic commissioning based on the needs of the child in order to truly make a difference."

The Department for Education has recognised that too often children's homes are used by local authorities as a 'last resort'. 7,900 of the 67,000 looked-after children in England are cared for in residential homes, and CSDG believe that residential care can and should play a vital role as part of a range of provision for children with complex needs.

Brian Durham added, *"Many children in residential homes will have had multiple placement breakdowns and often have the most complex needs. Residential care can provide young people with intensive and specialist therapeutic support that will enable them to live fulfilled adult lives – and we welcome any measures that will strengthen these vital services"*.

CSDG would urge the Government to take a strategic approach to reforming the wider care system in order to best meet the needs of vulnerable children, rather than making piecemeal changes in isolation.

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About the Children's Services Development Group:

- 🕒 The Children's Services Development Group is a policy coalition of leading independent providers of specialist services for looked after children and young people with complex needs.
- 🕒 Its members – Acorn Care & Education, Hesley Group, National Fostering Agency, Options Group, Priory Education Services, SENAD Group, Witherslack Group and Young Foundations – provide services to vulnerable young people, delivering excellent outcomes and value for money across the UK.
- 🕒 For more information please visit www.csdg.co.uk