

## **Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers:**

### **Alliance submission to England's Care Review 'Call for Evidence'**

#### **1. Name**

Ben Twomey and David Graham, Co-chairs of the Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers, and Ali Gunn, Chair of the Alliance Care Review Sub-group (all writing on behalf of the Alliance).

#### **2. Organisation name**

Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers

#### **3. Email address**

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#### **4. Can we contact you, using the email address you provided, with further information on the review (such as updates, events and opportunities to input)?**

Yes

#### **5. Can we contact you, using the email address you provided, if we have any follow-up questions relating to your responses below?**

Yes

#### **6. In which areas of children's social care do you think there is very robust research and evidence? Please provide this evidence where possible.**

Robust evidence and research about children's social care has been well reported and we are sure the review team will already be aware of the Children's Commissioner's [Stability Index](#) and report on [Private Provision in Children's Social Care](#). The [Bright Spots Programmes](#) research give valuable insights into children and young people's views of their well-being. Children England's report [Correcting a History of Market Failure](#), despite being written in 2014 still provides excellent evidence. Along with the LGA's research with [Newgate](#) and [Revolution Consultancy](#) in 2020.

#### **7. What do you think are the key findings from this research?**

We ask the Care Review team to familiarise themselves with these documents to discover their key findings.

**8. In which areas of children's social care do you think there are evidence gaps or conflicting evidence? Please provide this evidence where possible.**

There is a gap in analysis from a children's rights angle. We would want to see a firm commitment from the review team that any research and evidence is analysed through a child's rights approach, based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

There is little evidence available, including official statistics, on the impact of current homelessness policies on care leavers, especially older care leavers.

There is no clear policy decision for the dramatic increase in the use of unregulated accommodation and we feel there is a lack of published evidence for the decision to keep 16 and 17 year olds excluded. Recent investigations have in fact pointed to negative outcomes and the increased likelihood of serious safeguarding risks when children live in unregulated accommodation.

There are conflicting views around the trade-off between out of area placements and specialist foster placements and we feel that there is still limited research on foster carers.

There is very little publicly available research into secure children's homes for welfare.

More evidence is needed around effective interventions and trauma informed practice dealing with how the care system can effectively promote children and young people's emotional well-being and recovery from trauma. The Alliance produced a [paper in 2016](#) examining options for assessing and measuring the wellbeing and mental health outcomes for children in care across their care experience as mechanisms for assessing 'good quality care'.

**9. Do you know of any evidence, analysis or research that challenges current practices in children's social care? Please provide this evidence where possible.**

[Staying Put](#), [The Mockingbird programme evaluation](#) and [Mark Riddell's reports](#), particularly around council tax exemption all demonstrate positives of the care system and improved support from universities for care leavers provides excellent evidence for change in practice.

There are key pieces of often overlooked evidence from our members that you should be aware of:

The Fostering Network's [State of the Nation report](#)

Family Right's Group's [Lifelong Links evaluation](#)

Just for Kids Law [Not in Care, Not Counted report](#) which is based on FOIs and highlights the problems faced by homeless 16- and 17-year-olds who are

accommodated by local authorities under housing legislation and are wrongly not taken into care, including the 1 in 5 16- or 17-year-old housed in unregulated accommodation who are not in care.

We feel that there is overlooked evidence into the experience of young people who are ethnic minorities in the system and the health and wellbeing of children in care. We also think that more needs to be done to compare local offers and the postcode lottery care leavers. The success and significance of [Independent visitors](#) is also frequently overlooked.

The importance of advocacy in getting children and young people's voices heard and safeguarding their rights is often overlooked. A series of reports by the Children's commissioner addresses these issues:

- [Advocacy for children: Children and young people's advocacy in England](#)
- [Helping children get the care experience they need: Independent advocacy for children and young people in care](#)
- [Independent Advocacy: Impact and outcomes for children and young people](#)

More recently, Coram Voice's [Always Heard report 2020](#) has highlighted gaps in advocacy provision.

#### **10. Is there anything else that you would like to share?**

The Alliance feels strongly that this 'Call for Evidence' has given too limited a time in which to meaningfully engage care-experienced children and young people. Greater transparency is needed on plans for any future calls for evidence along with reasonable timeframes, so care-experienced children and young people can meaningful participate in every part of this process that intends to affect their lives.