



The All-Party Parliamentary Group  
for Looked After Children  
and Care Leavers

# The Entitlements Inquiry

## ‘One Year On’ Report

December 2014

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## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the 'one year on' inquiry in some way. We have read each response and submission with care and consideration. We appreciate the time that has been taken, as well as the time and dedication that many have given to making changes in this area.

We would especially like to thank all children in care and care leavers who took the time to answer our survey or send in a written evidence submission, and all those who supported them to do so, as well as those who are making changes in their local authorities.

## FOREWORD

The Entitlements Inquiry report was produced in response to young people who attended the All-Party Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers telling us that they were not getting the support to which they were entitled. The work of the inquiry was extremely interesting and thought-provoking and concluded by the publication of full and summary reports, ten recommendations and an incredibly lively and well-attended APPG meeting.

The idea of a 'one year on report' came from that APPG meeting in November, when one of the panellists suggested that we meet back in a year's time to see what had changed. So that is what we wanted to find out through this report: what has changed, what hasn't changed and whether children and young people are still getting the raw deal that we identified last year. We would like to thank everyone who took part in the 'one year on' inquiry, particularly the children and young people who took the time to tell us what was happening for them, as well as those who have quite clearly responded to the inquiry by making changes within their own organisations; to their own practice; or by campaigning for change themselves.

This report would not have been possible without the support of The Who Cares? Trust; in particular we thank Chloë Cockett for her patient and tireless support and dedication to not only this report, but The Entitlements Inquiry as a whole.

We are grateful to those government and local authorities who are trying to do their best for children and young people in care, and care leavers, in difficult financial circumstances.

We know that changes are being made, but there is no quick fix or easy solution. We must continue to work harder and do more to listen to children and young people to ensure that their needs are being met and their rights and entitlements upheld.



**Craig Whittaker MP**

Chair of the APPG  
for Looked After Children  
and Care Leavers



**Lord Listowel**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2013, the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers held an inquiry into the entitlements of looked after children and care leavers. In 2014, between 11<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> September, we collected evidence about the changes that have happened since the report was published in November 2013. 181 children in care and care leavers responded to the survey. 22 children in care and care leavers who took part this year had responded to the survey in 2013, with a further 27 not being sure whether they had. For comparison purposes, where young people indicated they were not sure whether they took part, they have been included as if they did. 233 professionals also responded to a separate survey for professionals. There were 21 written evidence submissions. Not all respondents gave permission for their submissions to be shared publicly, and not all evidence submissions responded to the questions that we asked. We have collected the written evidence responses into an appendix at the end of this document. We would urge you to read this appendix.

Just as in the original report, we refer to children and young people throughout this report. When we refer to children, we mean children who are in care, aged between 0 and 18. When we refer to young people we mean care leavers aged between 16 and 25. In any direct quotes, they may use the terms interchangeably. Children and young people are directly quoted in red italics, with any identifying features removed.

### **WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US**

There seems to have been some increase in knowledge and awareness among children and young people about their rights and entitlements. We don't know if this increase is representative of all children in care and care leavers, but it shows that for some their knowledge is increasing.

However, despite this increase, there is still a group of children and young people who know about their entitlements but are not receiving them. Although this can in some cases be explained by children and young people not being eligible to receive some of the entitlements (for example being in education, rather than seeking employment, or not currently attending university), there will still be a significant number who are eligible and who are not receiving their full entitlements.

## WHAT DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE KNOW?

In 2013	In 2014
29% of children in care said that they felt that they had all the information that they needed. 36% said that there were lots of things they didn't know.	37% of children in care said that they felt that they had all the information they needed. A quarter said that there were lots of things they didn't know.
17% of care leavers said that they had all the information they needed, while 33% of care leavers said that there were lots of things they didn't know.	32% of care leavers said that they felt that they had all the information they needed. 27% said that there were lots of things they didn't know.
	56% of the children and 71% of the young people who responded last year, felt that they knew more about what they were entitled to than last year. However, this was a small sample size.

A higher percentage of children and young people who responded to the survey said that they knew about the ten specific entitlements than said that they knew about them in 2013. When we looked at the responses for children and young people who hadn't completed the survey last year, 56% of children in care said that they knew that no important decision should be made without a review, compared to 58% in 2013. 50% of care leavers said that they knew that their local authority must help them with the costs of getting and keeping a job, compared with 41% last year.

## ARE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVING THEIR ENTITLEMENTS?

There was variability about receipt of entitlements. A higher percentage of children and young people reported receiving most entitlements, but a lower percentage reported receiving others. It's unclear why exactly this is, but we have found it concerning that there are still children and young people reporting that they are not receiving their basic rights and entitlements. Only 63% of children in care told us that they thought that they had a care plan, and less than half said that they had review meetings before big decisions were made. 70% of care leavers said that they had a pathway plan. While this percentage is higher than last year, this means that nearly a third of the young people who responded to the survey said that they did not have the crucial document that lays out the support that the local authority had agreed to give them as a care leaver.

We identified a self-advocacy gap in the 2013 report, and this continues to be the case. 8% of children in care who responded knew that major decisions about them shouldn't be made without a review meeting but that this didn't happen for them. The percentage of care leavers who said that they knew about certain entitlements but weren't getting them was much higher than for children in care. 10% of young people said that they knew that their local authority had to support them with getting and keeping a job, but weren't getting that support. 15% knew that the leaving care grant should be £2,000 but weren't getting it,

and 14% of young people said that they knew that they should be given a copy of their pathway plan, but didn't have it. This suggests that children and young people are struggling to get their voices heard, and that there should be a stronger focus on ensuring that all children and young people have access to good quality, independent advocacy.

We heard that children and young people are still not receiving entitlements correctly. We heard about the leaving care grant being under £2,000 or being used inappropriately. Five young people told us that they knew or thought that their leaving care grant was £1,500 with two other young people saying that they had received less than £2,000. Some young people told us that they have tried to get the amount increased to £2,000.

*I was aware that it was £1,500 and am under the impression my brother has been denied any more after spending his £1,500. (Care leaver age 21)*

*I was given £1,000 from my local authority when I left care but my leaving care worker stipulated that I needed to pay it back when I received a [grant]. (Care leaver age 22)*

*We asked for but it still hasn't been raised. (Care leaver age 18)*

*Some things I am purchasing are coming out of the allowance which I am not being told about. Had I of known I would have saved it for when I move out properly. (Care leaver age 20)*

*Was told about some funds for setting up but wasn't provided with the amount and was not given this amount. (Care leaver age 19)*

*I have been asked to use this to fund a [course] within my degree. (Care leaver age 18)*

*What they don't always tell you is that you don't get it all as it covers TV licence and insurance. (Care leaver age 20)*

We also heard examples of pathways plans not being completed, or being completed without the young person's knowledge, a lack of support to hold down jobs, a lack of provision for support in education and vacation accommodation support not being provided correctly, or at all.

*I didn't know I had a pathway plan and only found out several weeks ago but this was already after my leaving care social worker stopped working with me. (Care leaver age 22)*

*Didn't know they do until your 21/25 [in response to the entitlement for support in education or training] and also I have missed out on so much help due to lack of communication with everyone involved which obviously I am not happy about and I am currently waiting on some support AGAIN with a bus pass for work. (Care leaver age 18)*

*When I had a job in [town] I had to quit as it was too much money for me to get the bus to work than what I would be earning. (Care leaver age 17)*

*I am 22 now and only went back into education at 21. I am starting university and my local authority will not support as they said they no longer have an obligation to support me.  
(Care leaver age 22)*

*I was told that up to 50% of the [trip] could be requested at finance panel. This didn't happen. (Care leaver age 18)*

*During the holidays when I was at university I was left homeless having to stay with friends.  
(Care leaver age 24)*

*I asked for a laptop in March and it was agreed but I still haven't received it. (Care leaver age 20)*

*They paid my foster carer but had the cheek to ask for payment back after the [month] holidays last year. (Care leaver age 24)*

## **WHAT PROFESSIONALS TOLD US**

### **WHAT DO PROFESSIONALS KNOW?**

Less than half of the professionals who completed the survey said that they thought that they had an up to date understanding of the rights and entitlements of children in care and care leavers. 48% said that they mostly had all the information they need. Some professionals said that they had all the information they needed, but in answer to questions about specific entitlements had said that they didn't know, or were not sure if they knew about some of the entitlements for looked after children and care leavers. These professionals included residential workers, personal advisers and also senior managers of social care teams and corporate parenting board managers.

It is concerning that professionals who, as we found last year, children and care leavers want to be their one, reliable source of information, do not know about rights and entitlements, but think that they do. One social care senior manager said that they did not know about four of the ten entitlements, but that they thought that they had all the information they needed.

*Things are changing all the time so it is a challenge to keep up. If this is hard for workers then it is overwhelming and confusing for young people. (Participation Officer)*

We asked professionals if they responded in 2013. 73% of those professionals who did feel that they know more than they did last year. Only 17% thought that nothing had changed in their area as a result of the Entitlements Inquiry. Some of the things that professionals told us were:

*We have updated our brochures for young people and some of our financial policies to be more supportive. (Social Work Team Manager)*

*Young person friendly literature is being developed which is positive, as well as trying to incorporate more into the Pathway Plans. (Designated member of staff)*

*Entitlements Leaflet updated and provided to all LAC over the age of 16 about their entitlements as a care leaver. (Social Work Team Manager)*

*We have provided clearer written information about young people's entitlements. (Social Work Team Manager)*

*The Entitlements Inquiry has acted as an additional spur for improvement, especially around reviewing the recommended £2,000 support grant, examining more closely and working hard to improve what we mean and provide in terms of 'suitable accommodation' for care leavers. There has also been good progress in terms of a more meaningful care pledge, and a new 'working agreement', co-produced with children and young people, around social worker role and contact with children and young people who are looked after. (Participation worker)*

*My LA started giving young people a £2,000 setting up allowance. (Care-experienced professional)*

However, some professionals said that things weren't working as well as they should, or were not happening at all:

*[...] the £2,000 setting up money is an issue as if the young person don't use it by time they are 21 they lose it. More needs to be done to keep this money until the young person is ready and want to set up home even if that is at 30 years of age. Also the £2,000 setting up allowance is too little as you often have to here in [region] pay deposit and rent in advance from this money. (Personal Advisor)*

*In my area, these things were already in place, but some of it on an ad-hoc basis. There are still far too many young people without a proper understanding of what their pathway plan is, and far too many occurrences where children and young people's views are not considered when it comes to decision making around their lives. Far too many children do not know what a care plan is, or what theirs says. (Advocate)*

## **CONCLUSION**

There have been many positive changes since the Entitlements Inquiry reported in 2013, and many people have worked hard to ensure children and young people know their rights. As an additional part of the one year on inquiry, we collected evidence about changes that have happened in local authorities, and this can be read about in the appendix to this report. However, we are still hearing from children, young people and professionals that more needs to be done to make sure that children and young people know about their rights and entitlements, and get them.

*I often have to write complaints or fight for my rights. (Care leaver age 20)*

Many of the changes that we heard about through the online survey were linked to producing information for young people. More needs to be done to ensure that all staff are

trained and fully understand what the young people they work with are entitled to, and to ensure that all young people have access to good quality, independent advocacy to ensure that they receive all that they are entitled to. The self-advocacy gap needs to close, and more staff need to understand the system to ensure that they are able to give good quality, accurate information to individual children and young people.

## **APPENDIX: WRITTEN EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS**

In 2013, the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers held an inquiry into the entitlements of looked after children and care leavers. In 2014, between 11<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> September, we collected evidence about the changes that have happened since the report was launched in November 2013. There were 21 written evidence submissions. Not all respondents gave permission for their submissions to be shared publicly, and not all evidence submissions responded to the questions that we asked. One evidence submission reported on the work they had done towards the recommendations that the report produced. This was a lengthy and varied report. We have tried to capture the information that they provided that most fitted with the first two questions we asked for in our call for evidence.

We asked three questions:

- We asked if the Entitlements Inquiry report caused people to ask their local authority to change how they gave information or provide any of the entitlements.
- We asked what local authorities had done to make people more aware of rights and entitlements.
- We asked if anything else had changed since the report was launched, and if so, what that was.

We have analysed the different things that people said have changed or happened. We have grouped them and have used quotes from the evidence submissions to show the practice that has changed. Not all evidence submissions are quoted every time. Some evidence submissions told us about things that they provide which were already part of the rights and entitlements of children and young people. We're really pleased that they're providing this support to children and young people, but we have tried to focus on changes that go beyond statutory provision.

### **INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN ENTERING CARE OR LEAVING CARE**

Four evidence submissions told us that there had been information produced for children who are entering care, or for care leavers who have just left care:

*Furthermore, [organisation] produced a booklet for all new looked after children with information and signposting to information surrounding expectations from services, views and complaints procedure.*

*In addition a leaflet has been designed to give to young people at the point at which they become a care leaver summarising their entitlements. This will be available from September 2014.*

*We are in the process of developing an entry into care looked after children pack, building on our pledge.*

## **MORE INFORMATION, OR IN DIFFERENT WAYS**

15 evidence submissions said that there has been an increase in information provided, or in the way it is provided to children in care and care leavers. There have been leaflets, websites, handbooks, apps and information packs to name but a few.

*The service has produced a leaflet entitled: 'Setting up home allowance'*

*Our newest and most significant development has been the launching of a dedicated website for children in care and care leavers – [website name], which provides young people with an extensive range of information to ensure they are aware of the services and support to which they are entitled. Young people have been integral to the development of this website and our Care Ambassadors will have an on-going role in terms of the interactive element of the site*

*Designed new brochures/leaflets, jointly with our Children in Care Council, in an understandable format to ensure children and young people know what they are entitled too; know how to make a complaint, how to get an advocate and know more about the team and workers who will be supporting them.*

*As a result of the Entitlements inquiry we [young person's group] have professionally designed posters, have our own web link.*

*Entitlements booklet will be enhanced to be a more comprehensive Entitlements handbook which will be launched in September and will also include information and advice about health, work and apprenticeship opportunities.*

*We have provided the Entitlements leaflet to a web-based information portal for all foster carers.*

*Commissioned app to share information.*

## **TRAINING**

Four evidence submissions told us that training on entitlements had been designed, commissioned or was being investigated. This training varied in audiences, but included foster carers, social worker core training, all professionals who work with looked after children and senior managers, corporate parents and lead members.

*The Children in Care Council have undertaken training with senior managers and top decision makers, Induction training for new Social Workers, Corporate Parents, as well as newly elected members and Foster Carers.*

*We have joined with three of our neighbouring local authorities' CICC's and designed a joint training model for social workers in how to inform young people about their entitlements. We want this training to be used with all professionals working with looked after children, and for our CICC's to begin delivering this before Xmas.*

*We are currently investigating getting Children's Rights & Participation Training as part of the core training programme for social workers.*

In addition, two submissions said that young people were included in delivering training.

### **INVOLVING THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Five evidence submissions talked about reporting to, or involving the corporate parenting board.

*The Corporate Parenting Board has been involved in the journey of the Entitlements Booklet development, and will be updated on progress via the IRO annual report.*

*The CICC fed back the Inquiry to Corporate Parenting Board, they requested that a task group be set up to measure performance against the entitlement outcomes, this work is ongoing and is currently monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board.*

### **RAISED THE SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE TO £2,000**

Two submissions said that the local authority had raised the amount to £2,000. One evidence submission said that the care leavers group have campaigned with the children in care council to raise the amount, but they didn't say if they'd been successful.

### **REPORTING ON ENTITLEMENTS IN THE ANNUAL REPORT**

One of the recommendations in the Entitlements Inquiry report was that IROs report on whether young people know their rights and entitlements and that IRO managers include this in their annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board. Two evidence submissions said that this was happening in their local authority.

*Information regarding entitlements has been published in the Children in Care Newsletters & Annual Reports.*

### **REVIEWING KNOWLEDGE, COMMUNICATION AND SERVICES**

Two submissions said that a review of leaving care services was taking place and entitlements were being considered within this.

Four submissions said that they are monitoring young people's knowledge of entitlements, or asking what services could do better. Two areas are monitoring young people's knowledge by getting IROs to check, and two are surveying the children and young people themselves.

*We have undertaken a major survey of all 11 to 18yr olds who are looked after and 85 responded, telling us important information about their lives, what's working well and where we could do better.*

*During the summer, the CICC surveyed 43 young people, aged 6-24 to ascertain how well young people knew about the entitlements. 21 of these young people were under 13.*

*Within the guidance notes for chairs of pathway plans the 10 entitlements are listed with the expectation they discuss these with young people. Independent Reviewing Officers will then be able to talk to a young person to ensure they have been informed of their entitlements.*

Two submissions also talked about reviewing how the local authority communicates with children and young people. This has led to changes to how this happens.

*During the last year we have had many opportunities to hear from children in care and care leavers and this has identified a need to improve the way the council communicates with young people. The children in care council and care leavers forum are consulted more than they used to be.*

*Following the publication of the Entitlements report [local authority] has reviewed the mechanisms it uses to inform and communicate to young people their entitlements as a care leaver. Our developments have taken account of the different ways in which young people like to receive information.*

## **CREATING OR UPDATING A PLEDGE OR CHARTER**

Eight people told us that their local authority had reviewed, signed, updated or developed a pledge or charter. One person said that they have developed a pledge for younger children, and they use the pledge to monitor the knowledge of entitlements by children and young people.

*The issues [...] are now embedded in our Pledge and Directors and Managers of services will be held to account to ensure we act upon what was said.*

*Our pledges were launched a few years ago, but we felt that they weren't young people friendly enough and were outdated so all three CiCCs individually redesigned and launched new versions in 2014. These were given to all LAC in our authorities, and also now available online. We think young people are now more aware of their entitlements in the pledge. We feel this is because our new versions are more relevant, appealing and accessible.*

*As a result of consultation we agreed on a top ten pledges which our corporate parents have signed, agreed and promised to deliver.*

## **WE WERE ALSO TOLD...**

We were also told that local authorities are doing other things. We were told in two evidence submissions that the local authority had (or was planning to) recruited a participation or youth worker to help work on entitlements. Other submissions said that a review was being taken of how the local authority uses digital processes to work with young people, and provide information and advice. Several submissions talked about reviewing entitlements as part of the pathway plan, but they all did it in different ways.

*We also work closely with [charity] to improve knowledge and uptake of the IV service.*

*Most significantly our corporate parents employed a full time youth worker that works with us to facilitate the consultation of Looked After Children and supports our active involvement in the Entitlements Inquiry.*

*We are also planning a session with the Children in Care Council to review their perspectives one year on.*

## **CONCLUSION**

There has been a lot of work done locally following the Entitlements Inquiry report. We are really pleased that lots of it has been led and directed by children and young people themselves, often working with decision makers to make changes that affect lots of children in care and care leavers.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For more information on the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and to download the full or summary Entitlements Inquiry reports from 2013, visit [www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/appg](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/appg).