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**Supporting young people in and leaving care
who are parents:
Research findings and a charter for change**

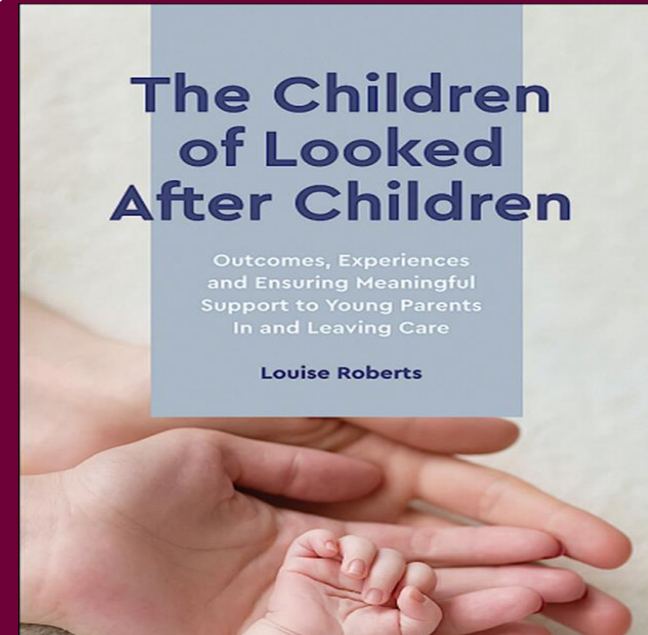


**Dr Louise Roberts and
Rachael Vaughan**



Introduction & Background

- Based on a 5-year research study
- Brings together previous publications plus new data
- Introductory chapter
- Thematic sections covering outcomes, experiences / perspectives, support
- Ends with letter from parent
- Free to download



Today's session: Key findings and next steps



Why is this important? What happens?
Outcomes



How can we make sense of these outcomes?
Professional and parent reflections



Opportunities for policy and practice change
#MessagestoCorporateParents

Outcomes from the Voices Study

Wales Adoption Study (Roberts et al. 2017)

- 374 CARA forms for children placed for adoption between July 2014-July 2015
- 27% of birth mothers, 19% birth fathers were care leavers

- **Data from 20 / 22 LAs in Wales** (Roberts et al. 2019)
- 258 parents (aged 16-21) identified by leaving care teams
- 238 children and 44 on-going pregnancies
- 74% of children were living with at least one biological parent
- 26% of children were separated from parents

(Mendes 2009, Svoboda et al 2012, Connolly et al 2012; Fallon and Broadhurst 2015; Winter et al. 2016; Eastman et al. 2019; Gill et al 2020, Purtell et al. 2020)

*1 in 4 children
were separated
from both birth
parents.*



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Making sense of the findings

Parent and Professional perspectives:

- Influence of past experiences on parenting capacity
- Systemic disadvantage
- Parents' relationships with social workers
- Disadvantaged access to support



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Making sense of the findings

- **Influence of past experiences on parenting capacity:**

I mean their experience is going to obviously impact on their ability to parent ... most relationships and experiences of parenthood is skewed or is dysfunctional so it's not going to have a good impact. (Team Manager)

- **Systemic disadvantage**

- Procedures and expectations of practice

[There is] an unspoken policy of every looked after child needs to be referred' (Senior Practitioner)

I don't think you'll find it written down anywhere but there's an expectation that they will be referred onto Children's Services as unborn yeah. (Team Manager)

Making sense of the findings

- **Use and influence of historical records**

The sheer fact we've got so much information on these young people ... when you look at some of the chronologies ... and you know the way things are sometimes written and I think everybody goes oh, this is really scary ... it is a shame because everything they've ever done you know we will know about. ... There are some that we don't think there is any risks, no concerns you know yes ok they have behaved stupidly in the past but how they're presenting now you know it's and I think somewhere there has to be a cut-off point doesn't there of when are we going to stop looking at the behaviours of this person when they were 14 and now they're 19 you know? (Personal Advisor)

- **Dual responsibilities of professionals**

We do have occasions when people run out of food or run out of electricity and you know and that is problematic because not only are they not meeting their own and their child's needs but they know that by coming to us, ... coming to us and asking us for help in that situation would trigger us to think about are there other things to be looking into? (Team Manager)

Making sense of the findings

- **Fear and distrust of social workers:**

I have had like worries over like social services obviously, I'm like thinking of them taking the baby off me. But I have been told that's not going to happen unless you do something wrong ... but then you don't know ... social services you know what they're like. (Bethany)

I was awake but my head was going ten to a dozen because like I didn't know what was happening, they took her off me and I thought oh what if social are here and they're going to take her off me. That's how I felt, how I thought. (Bethany)



Making sense of the findings

- **Problematic access to support**
 - Availability of informal support – ‘having someone by your side’
 - Formal support options / challenges

Overall, the availability of support through corporate parents was considered a poor substitute to what would ordinarily be available via birth families.

Yeah I think [corporate parents] need to have a better understanding and recognition in terms of what they would do for their own children when they're a parent, the support that they would provide.... I guess it's those little things that a lot people take for granted that care leavers don't have the opportunity to have really, which makes it twice as hard for them. (Team Manager)

Research video summary - YouTube





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Supporting Parents in and Leaving Care
#MessagesToCorporateParents ESRC IAA project
Jan 2021- Jan 2022



#MessagesToCorporateParents project plan

- 1. Consultation and co-production of good practice charter involving care experienced young people, policy makers, professionals and academics***
- 2. Production of accessible and engaging impact materials***
- 3. Awareness raising and securing commitment to the #MessagesToCorporateParents campaign within and outside Wales***

Consultation and co-production of good practice charter

This consultation phase of the project, involving both care-experienced parents and professionals, was designed to ensure the generation of meaningful and achievable commitments for the good practice charter.

- We worked with care-experienced parents in partnership with Voices From Care Cymru and National Youth Advocacy Service Wales.
- Third sector partner organisation and VFCC Policy Board.
- We received feedback from Social Work practitioners in England and Wales. Care Leaver local offer - [Care Leaver Local Offer :: Home \(careleaveroffer.co.uk\)](http://careleaveroffer.co.uk).



Working with Care-experienced parents

We attended regular session with Voices From Care Cymru's group and received contributions from NYAS Project Unity Parents.

- Explored what was important to them when pregnant and parenting.
- Looked at Dr Louise Roberts recommendations and other types of charters to start drafting our ask.
- The group had the final sign off for the charter.

"I have to do everything they say, but they can get away with doing nothing."

Care-experienced parent



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The Charter

A dedicated section of the Exchange Wales website has been created to hold all the resources.

[Supporting Parents in and Leaving Care: #MessagestoCorporateParents – ExChange](#)

[\(exchangewales.org\)](#)

[Cefnogi Rhieni mewn gofal ac wrth ei adael #NegeseuoniRieniCorfforaethol – ExChange](#)

[\(exchangewales.org\)](#)



The Charter

[The Charter summary video - YouTube](#)



From the Parents we worked with:

- Everyone always says it 'takes a village to raise a child', I've had to build my own village on my own. It shouldn't be this hard.
- The pandemic has been a time when a lot of help has been provided for people without any shame, this is how it should be.
- I want to normalise asking for help and support, not creating stigma and fear around it.
- I want professionals to see care experienced parents as all they are, not just their past experiences.
- I think its so important for all professionals – include police and health services to be thinking this way and be better informed.



From the Parents we worked with:

What role did you play in the development of the Charter?

Why did you get involved?

What impact do you hope it will have?



Feedback and Questions



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