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Launch of consensus-driven policy recommendations for the future of children's services

The Children's Services Development Group (CSDG), in partnership with a range of children's charities and provider and local authority groups, has today launched the first consensus-driven policy report on the State of Children's Services 2018-19.

The report is a snapshot of current thinking in the sector and is a basis for more in-depth discussions with government and the wider sector about children's services policy and delivery – considering the sector in the round rather than in service area silos.

The report makes eight policy recommendations, aimed at ensuring all vulnerable children and young people are able to access the care they need and deserve at the right time. This includes:

- The government, local authorities and providers must work together to develop a vision for the purpose of children's social care and specialist education, with a focus on achieving permanence.
- Guidance is needed to ensure that the needs of children and young people are placed at the heart of service delivery and commissioning decisions, rather than short-term cost considerations.
- Commissioning must be underpinned by improved use of data to understand how needs can be best met and which providers are best-placed to achieve this. Commissioners must be provided with the support to make the right placement decisions.

These recommendations stem from discussions with sector partners, including at a policy roundtable chaired by Tim Loughton MP. former Children's Minister and longstanding campaigner for vulnerable children and young people.

Commenting on the report, former Children's Minister Tim Loughton MP said:

"Local authorities and independent providers do an excellent job in providing high-quality services for vulnerable children and young people.

"However, at a time of limited funding and rising service demand, the sector and government need to collaborate to find solutions to meet needs efficiently and effectively while ensuring children and young people receive the high quality, bespoke care required to achieve positive life outcomes.

"I welcome this report as a positive contribution to the debate about how the children's services sector can and should be improved."

CSDG spokesperson Lizzie Wills said:

"Vulnerable children and young people have varied needs that require care from a range of providers and service areas.

"That is why CSDG brought together a range of different children's services experts to focus ongoing policy discussions on children's services in the round, rather than silos. CSDG is keen to work in partnership with government, local authorities and other providers to take these recommendations forward and ensure that all children and young people can access the services they need, first time."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

1. For more information, please contact Beatrice Allen on 0203 102 3626 or beatriceallen@wacomms.co.uk.
2. CSDG is a coalition of leading independent providers of care and specialist education services for children and young people with complex needs. Members provide various settings and services, including special educational needs, residential care and fostering across all of England's 152 local authorities.

As a collective voice for the independent sector, CSDG champions child-centred, meaningful, and outcomes focused support for vulnerable children and young people in order to ensure their stable and successful transition into adulthood.

3. CSDG members include: Compass Community, Core Assets Group, NFA Group, Outcomes First Group, SENAD Group and Witherslack Group.
4. Contributors to this report, in addition to CSDG members, include:
 - Barnardo's
 - Become
 - The Children's Society
 - Dame Christine Lenehan
 - DEMOS
 - The Fostering Network
 - Independent Children's Homes Association (ICHA)
 - Local Government Association
 - Mark Owers, National Fostering Stocktake Reviewer
 - National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS)
 - Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP)
 - Professor Julie Selwyn, University of Bristol
 - Solace