



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C.Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Sarah Daniel - Principal Democratic Services Officer (07385 086 169)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a Hybrid meeting of **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Virtual** on **WEDNESDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2022** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Monday, 14 March 2022 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 16 February 2022

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

4. RESILIENT FAMILIES SERVICE

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

5. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

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6. PERIOD DIGNITY

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7. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen and County Borough Councillor J Edwards respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor J Brencher, Councillor J Barton, Councillor A Calvert, Councillor S Evans, Councillor A Fox, Councillor E Griffiths, Councillor S Morgans, Councillor S Powell, Councillor M Powell, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor S Trask and Councillor D Williams

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr M Cleverley
Mr M Veale, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE

Mr C Jones, Representing GMB

Mrs C Jones, Representing the National Union of Teachers and Teachers' Panel

Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Mr D Price, Representing UNISON

Mr A Rickett, Voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative

Ms R Lydon, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16th MARCH 2022

THE RESILIENT FAMILIES SERVICE – PERFORMANCE

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDRENS SERVICES

Author: Zoe Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To brief Members on the performance of the Resilient Families Service during the financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 to date.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained in this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in further depth any matters contained in this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the work of the Resilient Families Service and an analysis of the service's performance data for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 to date.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2018 Rhondda Cynon Taf established the RCT Resilient Families Programme to support a wide range of partners to work together to co-ordinate the delivery of timely and effective services to families to maximise outcomes for families as well as demonstrate the Council's commitment to the wider early intervention and prevention agenda embedded in the

principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- 4.2 To deliver this programme of early intervention and prevention work the Resilient Families Service (RFS) was established to provide direct support to families requiring early intervention and prevention services and deliver an enhanced Team Around the Family (TAF) model.
- 4.3 Support from the Resilient Families Service is not subject to any specific threshold criteria and therefore is universally available to families residing in RCT who are:
- referred to the Information Advice and Assistance Team (IAA) but do not meet the threshold for statutory service intervention. Referrals can be made as a self-referral by family members or by other agencies, where it has been identified that the family would benefit from the early intervention to support and prevent their needs escalating further.
 - 'stepped down' from statutory Children's Services as no longer requiring child protection intervention but would benefit from continued family support.
- 4.4 The Resilient Families Service takes a collaborative and integrated approach to co-ordinating the contribution of a wide range of partners in delivering the right support at the right time to families and ensuring that the family remain central to the delivery of any services. The approach:
- Provides timely intervention to prevent the multiple and/or complex needs of families escalating to crisis levels;
 - Recognises the needs of the whole family and supports a holistic approach to address issues collaboratively
 - Ensures the commissioning of services for children, young people and families is undertaken in response to the known needs of families in RCT
 - Ensures that access to services is available RCT wide and is not limited to geographical areas
- 4.5 The service delivery model employs a proactive, strengths based, relational approach to working with families that offers practical support to remove barriers to positive change. Focusing on assessing and improving the level of resilience families have, to deal with the challenges they face, the service provides timely, appropriate and effective early intervention support to prevent them from requiring statutory intervention. The Service sits within the Children's Services structure and is Social Worker led, comprising of seven core teams:

The **Assessment Brokerage and Review Teams (East and West)** undertake assessments with all families referred to the Service, create an individual plan for every family plan and review the plan to ensure the work has been done. Roles in these teams include Engagement and Assessment Officers who are responsible for engaging families and undertaking assessments on behalf of the whole service and Brokerage and Review Officers who are responsible for building and reviewing family plans and managing professionals and services delivering elements of these plans.

The **Families Plus Team** works with families that are close to the Children's Service threshold for intervention and require intensive support to reduce the level of risk within

the family. Intervention Workers provide intensive support to families to focus on relationships within the family and build networks within their community.

The ***Children with Additional Needs Service (CANS)*** works with any family where the learning, physical or neuro-developmental needs of a child within the family is impacting on family life. Intervention Workers provide intensive support to families to focus on relationships within the family and build networks within their community.

The ***Parenting Support Team*** focuses on working with parents and children to develop early language and communication skills through play as well as supporting families to develop their parenting skills to manage their children's needs in a productive and positive way. Previously both parenting support and early language and communication services were only available for a small percentage of children and families living in particular geographical areas in RCT, via the Flying Start Programme. Now these services are universally available to any children and families in RCT who require it, via the Resilient Families Service.

The ***Families Teams (East and West)*** work with families that require support to improve the quality of family life. Intervention Workers employed by Barnardos provide intensive support to families to focus on relationships within the family and build networks within their community.

4.6 In addition to the core teams, work with families is also supported by a multi-disciplinary specialist team within RFS. This specialist appraisal, assessment and therapeutic and targeted intervention support is provided by the following roles:

- RFS Specialist Health Visitors
- RFS Community Nursery Nurses
- Educational Psychologist
- Assistant Educational Psychologist
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Occupational Therapist
- PSCO

4.7 Alongside the RFS teams, support for families is also delivered by a range of commissioned services who operate as fully integrated part of the delivery model and undertake direct work with families to address actions within RFS Family Plans. The RFS Providers Forum currently engages over 40 partner organisations who assist in the delivery of integrated family support.

4.8 As part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Early Years Transformation Programme, Rhondda Cynon Taf is piloting the delivery of a new early years system for 0-7 year olds and the extension of Flying Start services to be available universally. This new approach being piloted in RCT utilises the pre-existing operational infrastructure of the Resilient Families Service to deliver enhanced early years services to any child and family across the County Borough who require it including enhanced Health Visiting, universal parenting support, early language support and the provision of funded childcare places for 2-3 year olds.

4.9 The Resilience and Wellbeing Health Programme which forms part of the RCT pilot model formalises the delivery of fully integrated health and social care services in the early years and is the first of its kind in Wales. Launched in October 2020, this is a single programme of support delivered jointly by RFS and Health visiting utilising a single front door approach to providing bespoke early intervention and prevention services for children and families.

5. IMPACT OF COVID-19

5.1 Covid-19 has changed the family support landscape immeasurably both in terms of the increased demand for services and the innovative delivery of these services. The vast majority of parents, if not all, have struggled at some point during the pandemic to support their children through it whilst managing their own needs at the same time. The additional pressures put upon families as a result of lockdown compounded issues to a point of crisis for many.

5.2 As a key front line service RFS continued to undertake face to face contact with families on safeguarding grounds throughout the pandemic, however the vast majority of service delivery had to be amended significantly and quickly to provide families with support that did not rely on face-to-face contact due to the national restrictions.

5.3 The impact of Covid-19 is still being felt by families and is likely to continue and evolve for some time as restrictions ease and everyday life returns to normal. This is evident in the increased demand for and engagement in support services from a much wider cohort than was previously seen.

5.4 The innovation of staff to meet the needs of children, parents and families remotely during lockdown deserves commendation and it is from this innovation an evidence base has emerged to support the continuation of virtual and remote methods of service delivery to engage with parents who have traditionally been hard to reach. In the first 6 months of lockdown the RFS received 83,000 views of the parenting support videos they had produced and posted on social media platforms.

5.5 Resilient Families Service staff worked closely with the Community Resilience Hubs to ensure children and families who were required to shield had food and medication and with community groups to provide families with ipads and resources to ensure that low-income families could access and engage virtually with the support services they required.

5.6 Across the wider Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service staff team over 3,000 activity packs were created and distributed to vulnerable children and families across the County Borough to support their wellbeing and encourage children's positive social and emotional development in the most difficult of circumstances.

5.7 Resilient Families Service Provider Forum meetings were held remotely and focused on contingency and recovery plans to support continuity of services and were instrumental in securing a collaborative and co-ordinated response to new and emerging needs as a result of covid.

5.8 Service development also continued during the pandemic in swift response to new and emerging needs. Recommissioning parenting support services provided the Council with

the opportunity to respond to the new landscape and meet the demand for parenting support that is timely, responsive and delivered in a number of formats to improve accessibility for a wider range of parents.

- 5.9 The demand across RFS during the pandemic has been significant, resulting in capacity issues across the internal and external teams. Additional financial support was agreed by the Council’s Senior Leadership Team to increase the number of RFS staff to meet this ongoing demand. Since the start of the pandemic an additional 12 staff have been recruited on a temporary basis to meet service demands. These additional posts within the core RFS teams are delivering support services directly to families and ensuring that despite the significant increase in demand there are no waiting lists for families to access RFS support. WG additional grant funding has been utilised to support the sustainability of third sector partners who remain a vital element of the RFS offer.

6. PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 Over the last four years since the creation of the service, RFS has had contact with over 7,000 families in RCT. The table below provides a breakdown of referral rates by calendar year and provides a comparison of these rates against both of the preceding year and of the baseline year in 2018 (RFS was operational from 1st January 2018).

Calendar Year	RFS Referrals	Step downs	DSR*	Total	Difference from preceding year	Difference from baseline year
2018	1145	360	27	1532	-	-
2019	1301	368	21	1690	+ 158	+ 158
2020	1017	241	8	1266	- 424	- 266
2021	1784	367	7	2158	+ 892	+ 626
2022						
January	182	23	3	208	+ 81	-
February	162	34	4	200	+ 62	-
2022 (so far)	344	57	7	408	+143	-
Total	5591	1393	70	7054		

*Direct Service Referrals (DSR) are from Children’s Services Teams requesting specific pieces of work to be undertaken by RFS with families open to them (e.g. Disabled Children’s Team requesting parenting programme)

- 6.2 As the table above shows, during 2020 the referral rate dropped significantly as a result of the number of families requesting to suspend engagement with the service until restrictions were lifted and more practical face to face support could be provided. As a result of the removal of restrictions the service has experienced a surge in the level of demand for family support evidenced in a 70% increase in referrals in 2021. This situation has made comparative analysis of performance data challenging, therefore for the purpose of this report, an analysis of the full financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and the 2020-21 data @ 28th February 2022 is offered in this section. Further detail in relation to the full financial year 2020-21 and 2021-22 to date performance data can be found in Appendix 1.

- 6.3 Of the almost 3000 combined referrals received in 2019-20 and 2020-21 just over a third were re-referrals into the service. Whilst traditionally re-referral has negative connotations, RFS was set up to provide the right support at the right time and as such this is a particularly positive indicator that families have positive experiences and relationships with RFS and are happy to return for further help and support as required. In terms of preventing escalation of need, re-referral into early intervention services is an important protective factor for families and something to be recognised as an indicator of positive culture change in public perception of social care services. This rate of re-referral increased to 46% of the combined 3,375 referrals received in 2020-21 and 2021-22, most likely as a result of families choosing to suspend engagement with the service whilst restrictions were in place and re-engaging following easement.
- 6.4 Between April 2019 and March 2021, the Service saw five times more cases stepped down from Children's Services teams than cases requiring step up for statutory intervention with the total number of cases during this period requiring step up being 126, only 4% of the total number of referrals to RFS. Between April 2020 and February 2022 the step up rate has decreased further to 110 cases; almost six times more step down than step ups and only 3% of the total number of referrals to RFS requiring statutory intervention. This evidences that RFS is successfully managing and reducing risk for families, preventing the need for statutory intervention and is successfully and safely holding cases that would have traditionally sat with within the statutory arena.
- 6.5 Whilst referrals decreased by a quarter in 2020-21 as a result of families preferring to wait until the usual hands on RFS approach could resume, by July 2021 the average monthly referral rate sat at 126% more than the previous year. Comparison of the average monthly referral rate between 2020-21 and 2021-22 shows a more settled picture yet demand remains extremely high with an 80% increase on 2020-21 levels.
- 6.6 As expected, the data shows a decrease in referrals from universal services such as schools during the pandemic and an increase in referrals to RFS from community groups and commissioned providers who were in closer contact with families. This year has seen an increase in referrals from Health Visitors, schools and also self referrals which have risen by over 5%.
- 6.7 In 2020-21 there was also a measurable increase in the families presenting with support needs linked directly to the challenges of covid and lockdown such as increased stress across the family unit as well as a marked rise in the complexity of cases. 2021-22 data evidences a continued increase in stress levels of a further 13.6% (69.9% of families) and the need for intense support to address challenges (52.6% of families), alongside a steep increase in the mental health related needs (45.1% of families). Of concern is the increase in reported disengagement in leisure, sport and community activities (40.9% of families), which are recognised protective factors to building and maintaining resilience.
- 6.8 Appraisals form part of the assessment process where specialist recommendations are made to address barriers to engagement and resilience building faced by a family. Appraisals are sought from key services (both internal and external to the Council) that are commissioned to provide this specialist function on behalf of RFS. One of the third sector partners commissioned to undertake Appraisals and provide specialist interventions as a fully integrated part of the RFS delivery model is Citizen's Advice RCT who provide financial inclusion appraisals for families. In 2020-21, 237 families received

an RFS Financial Appraisal which totalled a combined secured financial gain of £323,746; an significant average gain of £1,366 per family.

- 6.9 The rate of disengagement halved between 2019-20 and 2020-21 and the number reporting increased resilience also increased illustrating that even though smaller numbers were coming through they were staying with the service with improved outcomes which is testament to the flexibility of staff to find new ways of working with families remotely. The number of families disengaging has slightly increased this year with this cohort representing 13% of all referrals in 2020/21 and 14.4% in 2021/22. Further analysis of the referral source for families who disengaged from RFS at the pre action plan stage during 2021/22, shows that 21% were step down cases from Children's Services (64 families). This is a proportional improvement from the 34% (58 families) in 2020-21. This is attributable to the voluntary nature of engagement with RFS.
- 6.10 Analysis of data also demonstrates the impact of RFS in disrupting the negative cycle of impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on individuals and families, with families scoring the same or better in RFS exit assessments in those domains directly linked to protective factors e.g. the home is safe. The areas where the greatest impact of RFS involvement is realised are:
- **Home is safe and suitable** - 98.8% improved or maintained (increase of 0.3% from 2020-21)
 - **Able to demonstrate self control** - 98.6% improved or maintained) (increase of 0.1% from 2020-21)
 - **Drug and alcohol use** - 98.6% improved or maintained) (increase of 0.6% from 2020-21)
 - **Abuse or Violence** - 98.3% improved or maintained (increase of 1.5% from 2020-21)

7. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2022-23

- 7.1 As part of the Early Years Transformation Programme, the delivery new Early Years system for 0-7 year olds being piloted in RCT is subject to rigorous external evaluation. This includes evaluation of the Resilient Families Service model as a means to provide universally accessible early intervention and prevention services. This comprises a three stage external evaluation, the second stage of which is currently underway and is focused on rigorous evaluation of the systems and processes of RFS that underpin the pilot delivery model. The Stage 1 evaluation undertaken by Miller Research in April 2021 noted that *'as the approach is built on the integration work that has already happened in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, notably the establishment of the Resilient Families Service, delivery has begun successfully. Services are available to all in RCT with access determined by assessment of need'*. A third stage of evaluation is planned for 2023-24 which will be a summative evaluation concerned with measuring the outcomes for service users and the impact on services and policy of the new delivery model. The findings of this Stage 3 evaluation will inform local discussion about the adoption of this model on a regional footprint as well as formal discussions with Welsh Government about implications for national policy.
- 7.2 When Section 1 of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 (Children Wales Act) comes into force on 21 March 2022 it will remove the defence of reasonable punishment. From this time all physical punishment of

children will be illegal in Wales, to help protect children's rights, including punishment by parents and anyone acting in loco parentis in any setting in Wales, including visitors to Wales. Parents who physically punish their children following the commencement of Section 1 of the Act will commit an offence and may, therefore, be charged with the criminal offence of assault and battery. If the police (having considered the evidential and public interest tests) decide to take further action against a parent who has physically punished their child, they might offer an out of court disposal (O OCD) to avoid the potential of prosecution through the courts for low level offences. A condition of the O OCD would be engagement in parenting support which is intended to develop positive non-violent parenting practices. This parenting support intervention will be delivered by the RFS Parenting Team and will seek to improve parents' understanding, attitude, behaviour and skills to parent their children without the use of physical punishment. Joint delivery pathways and mechanisms are currently being finalised to establish the necessary working arrangements between the Council and the Police to implement the new legislative framework.

- 7.3 The MAGU Project builds on the work started in RFS to integrate health and social care services for pregnant women and families and offers a single pathway through early intervention and prevention and edge of care services to provide consistent support and intervention from 12 weeks of pregnancy through to the age of 1 to prevent children entering care. The term 'Magu' translates from Welsh as *'to bring up, rear, nurture, raise, gain'* and promotes the ongoing long term nature of the support required to deliver better outcomes for children and families. The MAGU project has recently been approved by Cabinet and construction of the service is underway. This includes the creation of a new integrated delivery pathway between Community Midwifery, RFS and Children's Services to embed an early intervention approach and facilitate smooth and effective transitions between services for the benefit of children and families.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An equality impact assessment is not currently required as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 A 'Parenting through Covid-19' Survey was created and public consultation undertaken in September 2020. Analysis of this survey feedback was used to inform the revision of parenting support services as part of the RFS offer.
- 9.2 Informal consultation takes place on a regular basis with families receiving Resilient Families Service interventions who are given opportunities to provide feedback on their experience of accessing the service, outcomes as a result and areas for improvement.
- 9.3 Consultation with partners including; health, education, housing providers, childcare and play providers, and third sector organisations takes place on a termly basis via the Resilient Families Service Provider Forum meetings, and also on a one to one basis during contract monitoring visits. All commissioned partners are signed up to providing universal access to family support services as set out by the Council's Resilient Families Programme.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 The cost of the Resilient Families Service is mainly met from existing grant funding as part of the Children and Communities Grant the Council receives from Welsh Government. In addition to this, contributions are also made from Council core budget and other external grant funding streams.
- 10.2 As with all grant funding there is a level of risk to the Council should this funding be withdrawn at a future time, however the Welsh Government remains committed to the delivery of integrated early help services for families within the wider anti-poverty and early intervention and prevention agendas.
- 10.3 The Children and Communities Grant offers far more flexibility than the Council has previously had to move funding where it is required to meet identified need, therefore should a reduction in the grant occur the Council remains in a good position to re-allocate funds to priority areas. As a result of Covid-19 the delivery of early intervention and prevention support for families is a clear identified priority for both the Council and Welsh Government with additional resources to increase staffing capacity having been made available in 2021-22 and recent confirmation that with will extend to 2022-23.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 There are no legal implications arising from this work.
- 11.2 The following legislation was considered in relation to the development of the Resilient Families Programme:

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014:

- Putting an individual and their needs, at the centre of their care, and giving them a voice in, and control over reaching the outcomes that help them achieve well-being
- Supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of this care and support
- Increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need
- Strong partnership working between all agencies and organisations.

The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A more equal Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales

12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 12.1 The Resilient Families Service contributes to the Council's corporate priority that People are independent, healthy and successful, by improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do by:
- working in partnership with Welsh Government, strive to reduce child poverty, providing services that encourage and build resilience of children and their families.

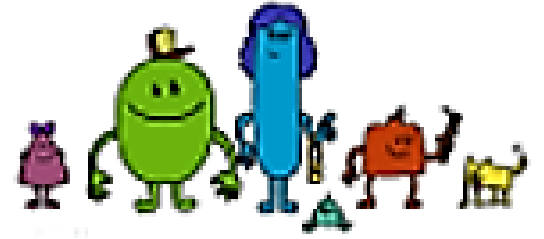
12.2 The Resilient Families Service has been developed in full consideration of the sustainable development principles. The work also supports the Council to contribute to all of the seven well-being goals:-

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive Communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 Supporting a wide range of partners to work together to co-ordinate the delivery of timely and effective services to families, the RCT Resilient Families Programme enables the Council to maximise outcomes for families as well as demonstrate its commitment to the wider early intervention and prevention agenda embedded in the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

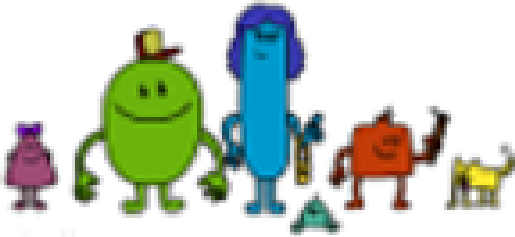
13.2 The work of the Resilient Families Service in providing early intervention family support remains a vital part of the Council's approach to providing the right support at the right time and reducing the need for statutory intervention. This work is needed now more than ever in light of the challenges facing families across RCT as a result of covid-19.



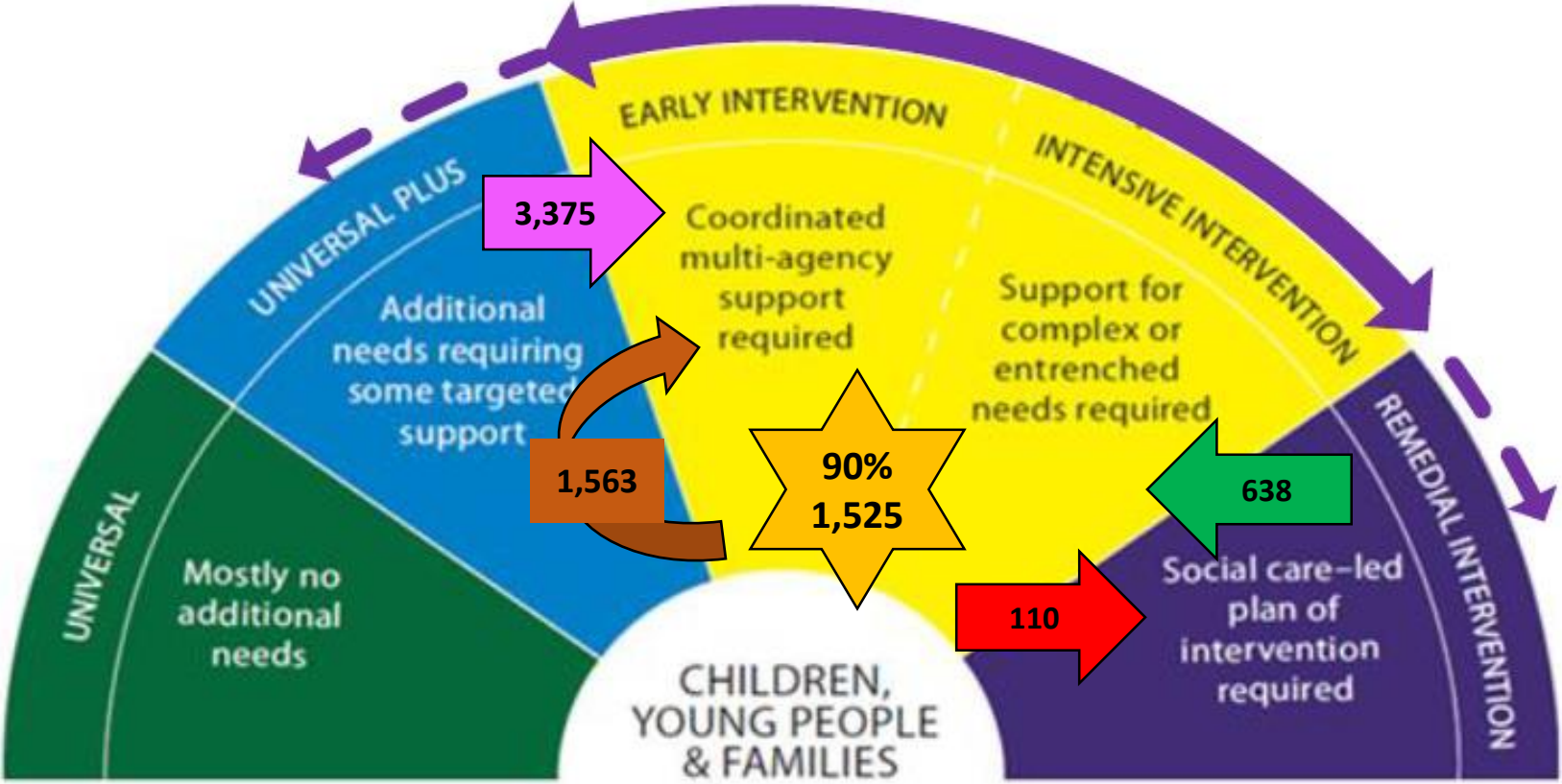
Resilient Families Service Performance Data for

2020/21 (1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021) **and**
2021/22 (1st April 2021 – 28th February 2022)

Performance for 2020/21 and 2021/22

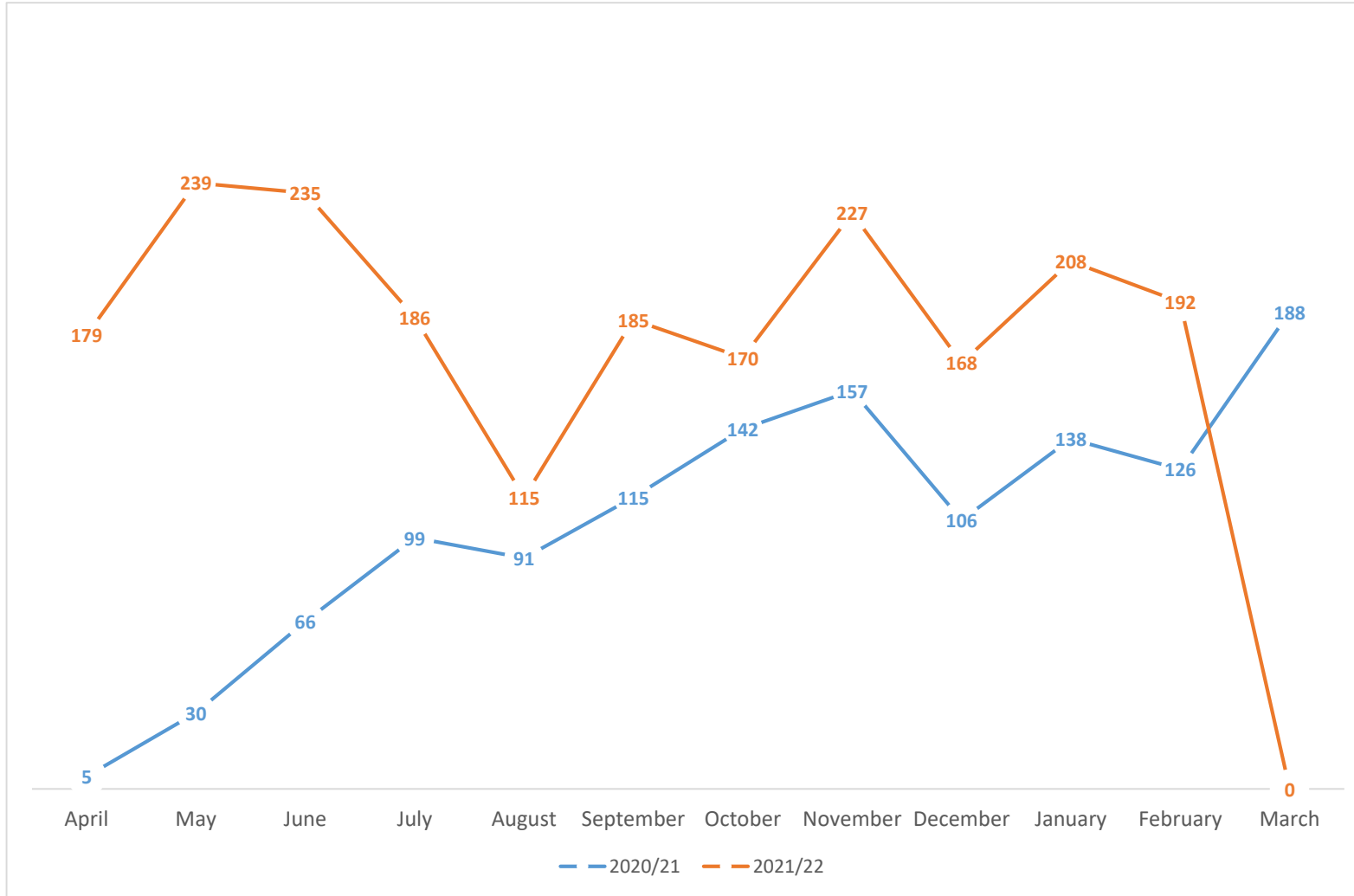


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- Referrals
- Step downs
- Step ups
- Re-referrals
- Improved resilience

Referrals into RFS



Between 2020/21 and 2021/22, the total number of referrals received by RFS has increased by over 800, from 1,269 in 2020/21 to 2,104 with a month still remaining of this financial year

As the chart demonstrates the number of referrals received each month fluctuates significantly but comparing this data with previous years we are starting to see a trend with increased numbers received during November and January.

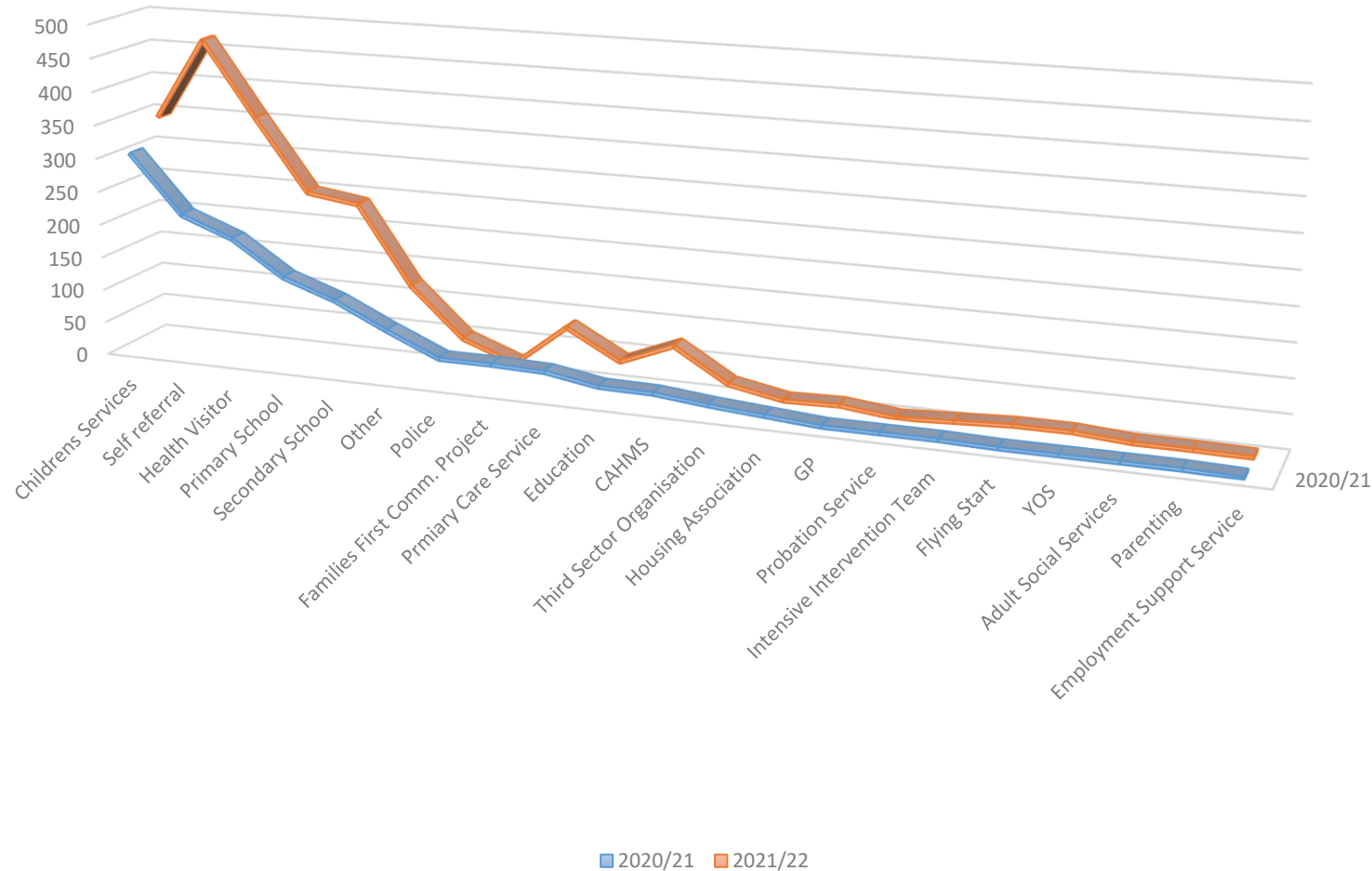
The average number of referrals received per month has almost doubled this year

2021/22 – 191

2020/21 – 106

N.B March 2022 data not available yet

Referral sources

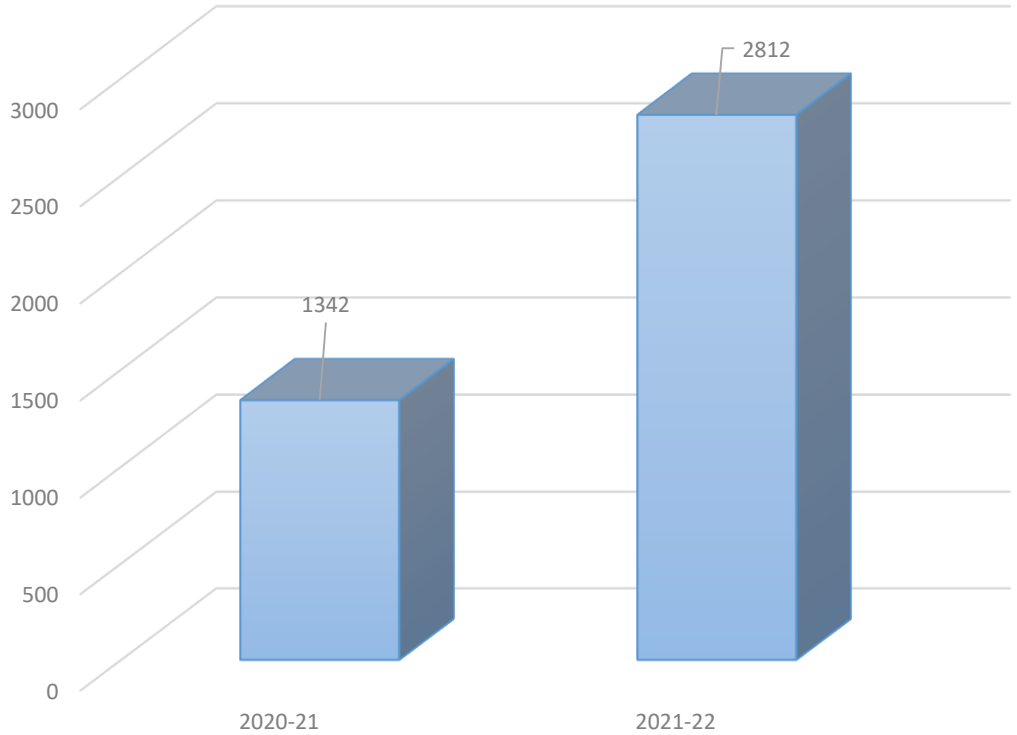


During this 2 year period although referral rates from sources has changed the highest areas remain:

	2020-21	2021-22
Children's Services	24%	16.4%
Self referrals	17%	22.2%
Health Visitors	15%	16.9%
Primary Schools	11%	11.8%
Secondary Schools	9%	11.3%

2021-22 saw an increase in referrals from Health Visitors, schools and self referrals and a decrease in referrals from Children's Services – most likely as a result of increased capacity in RFS to hold cases as a result of the easement of covid restrictions

Appraisals



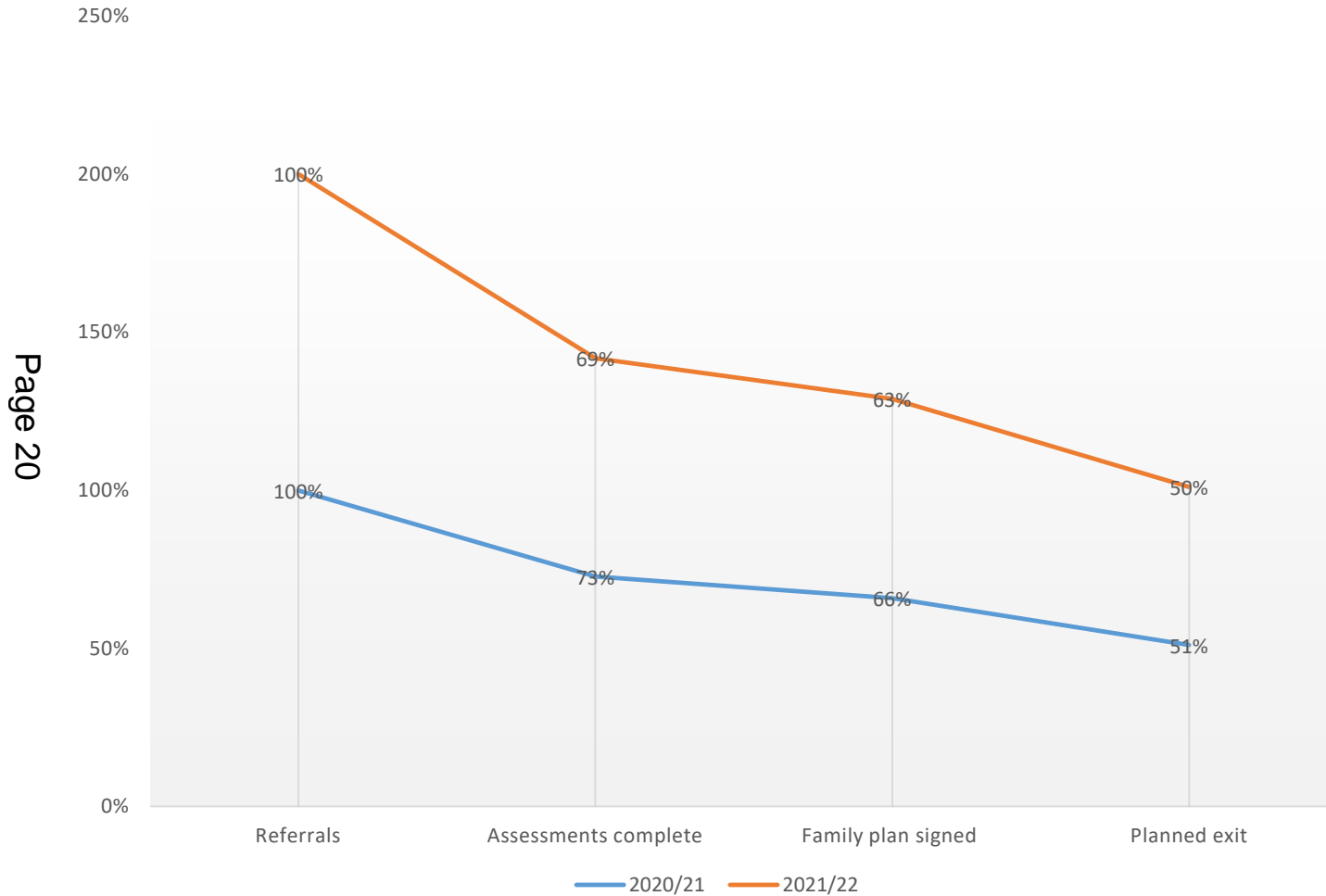
The chart above shows the significant increase in the number of appraisals completed in 2021-22 when compared to the previous year, an increase of 110%.

<u>Appraisals</u>	2020/21	2021/22	Difference
Parenting	421	655	+ 234
Education	261	609	+ 348
Health	210	384	+ 174
Finance	155	220	+ 65
YEPS	142	223	+ 81
Childcare	65	79	+ 14
Housing	50	92	+ 42
YOS	26	71	+ 45
Midwifery Appraisal	12	55	+ 33

The table above provides a breakdown of the different appraisals undertaken over the 2 years. It highlights that there has been a significant increase most appraisals.

In addition there have been 3 new appraisals added this year – Early Years, Family Therapy and Early Language and Communication

Retention



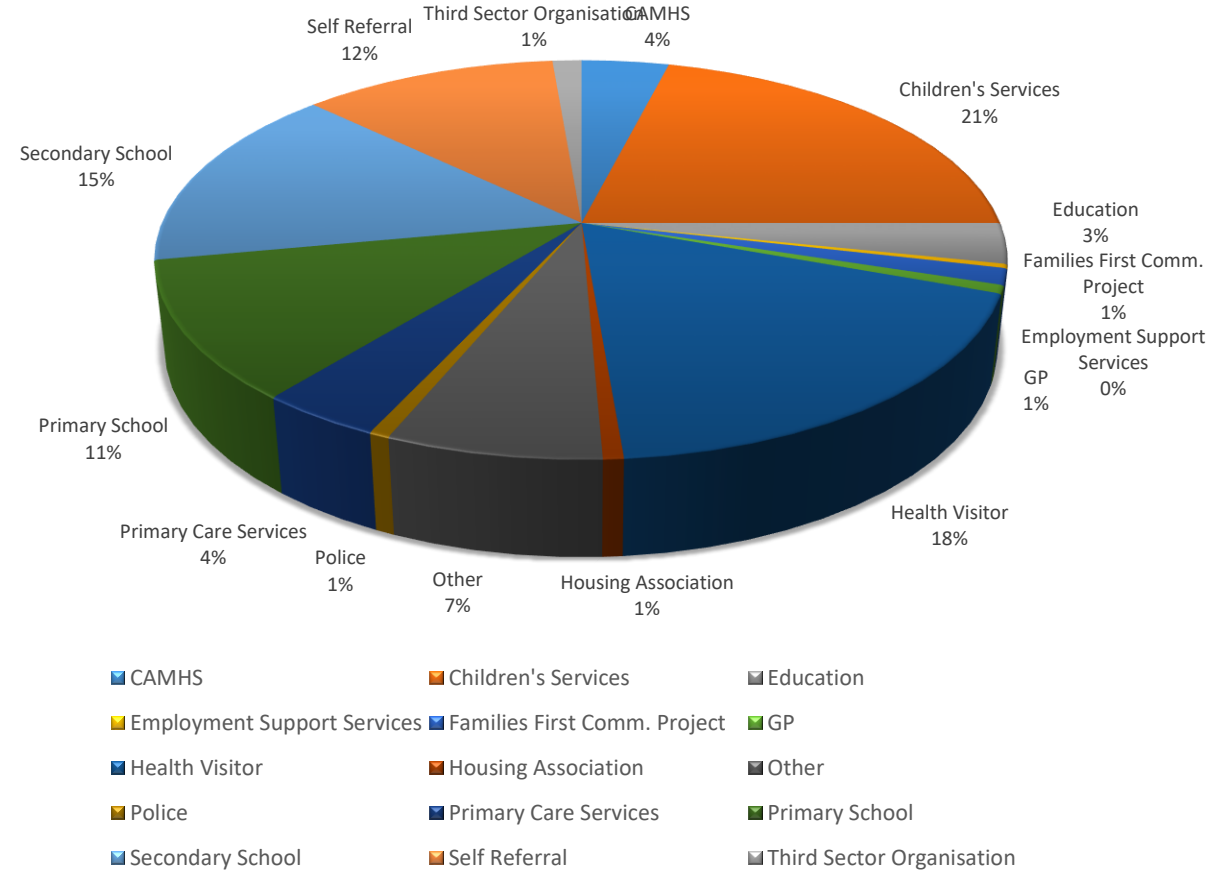
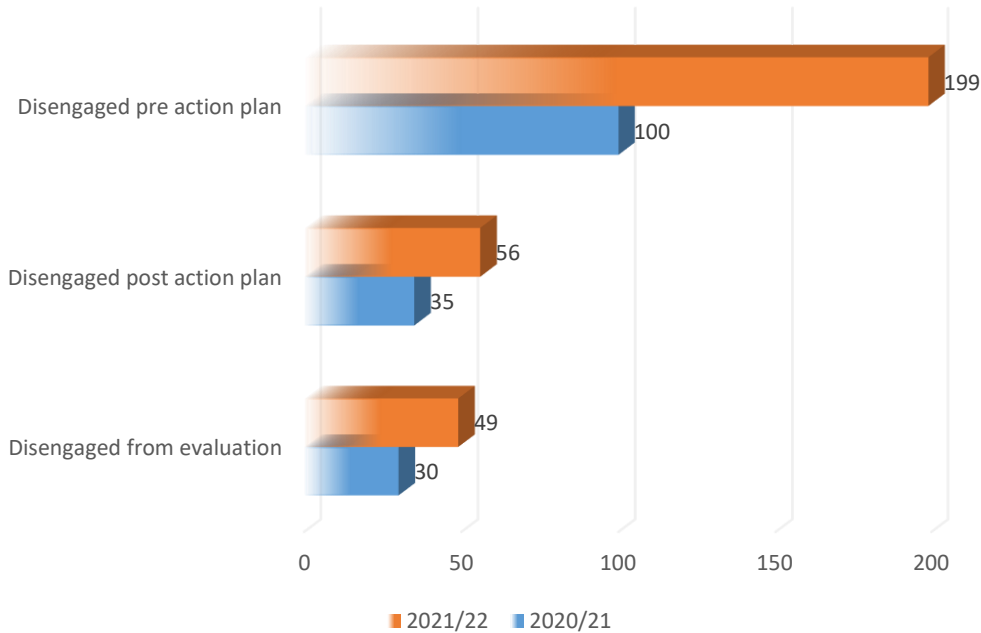
The chart illustrates the retention rate of families at each of the key stages of the RFS model.

Up to the point lockdown started in March 2020 RFS were on course to follow the trend of previous years and record a continuous improvement in the retention rate.

The significant restrictions placed on the service as a result of the pandemic had a major impact on our ability to provide the face to face services families required. Families have struggled to maintain engagement via virtual delivery methods which has contributed to the fall in retention rates.

Disengagement

RFS DISENGAGEMENT



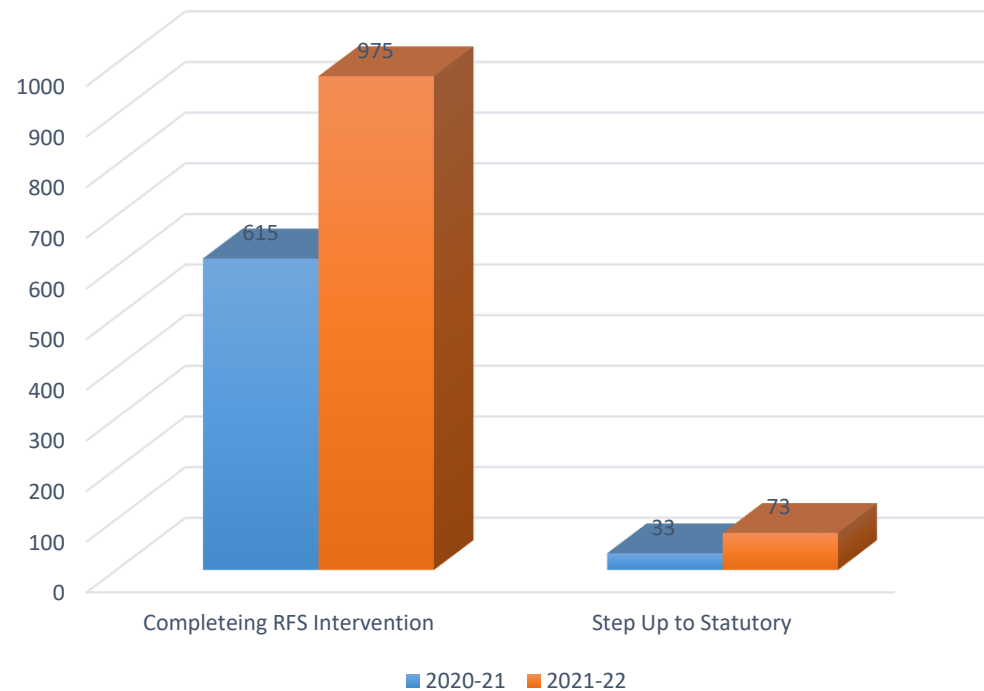
The number of families disengaging has slightly increased this year with this cohort representing 13% of all referrals in 2020/21 and 14.4% in 2021/22. Further analysis of the referral source for families who disengaged from RFS at the pre action plan stage during 2021/22, shows that 21% were step down cases from Children's Services (64 families). This is a proportional improvement from the 34% (58 families) in 2020-21. This is attributable to the voluntary nature of engagement with RFS.

Outcomes

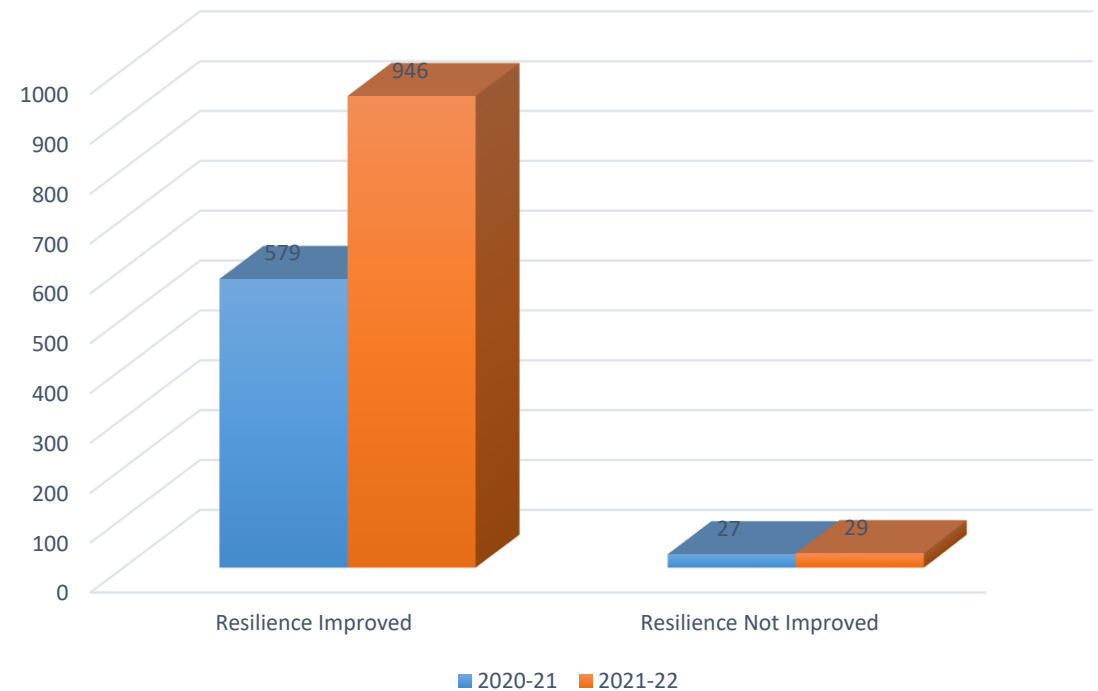
Of planned exits so far in 2021/22, 93% in of families completed full RFS package of intervention with the remainder requiring a supported step up to statutory services due to increased levels of need/risk. This compares to a full year figure of 94% in 2020/21

Of those families completing a full RFS package of intervention, 97% have recorded improved resilience this year compared to 95.5% in 2020/21

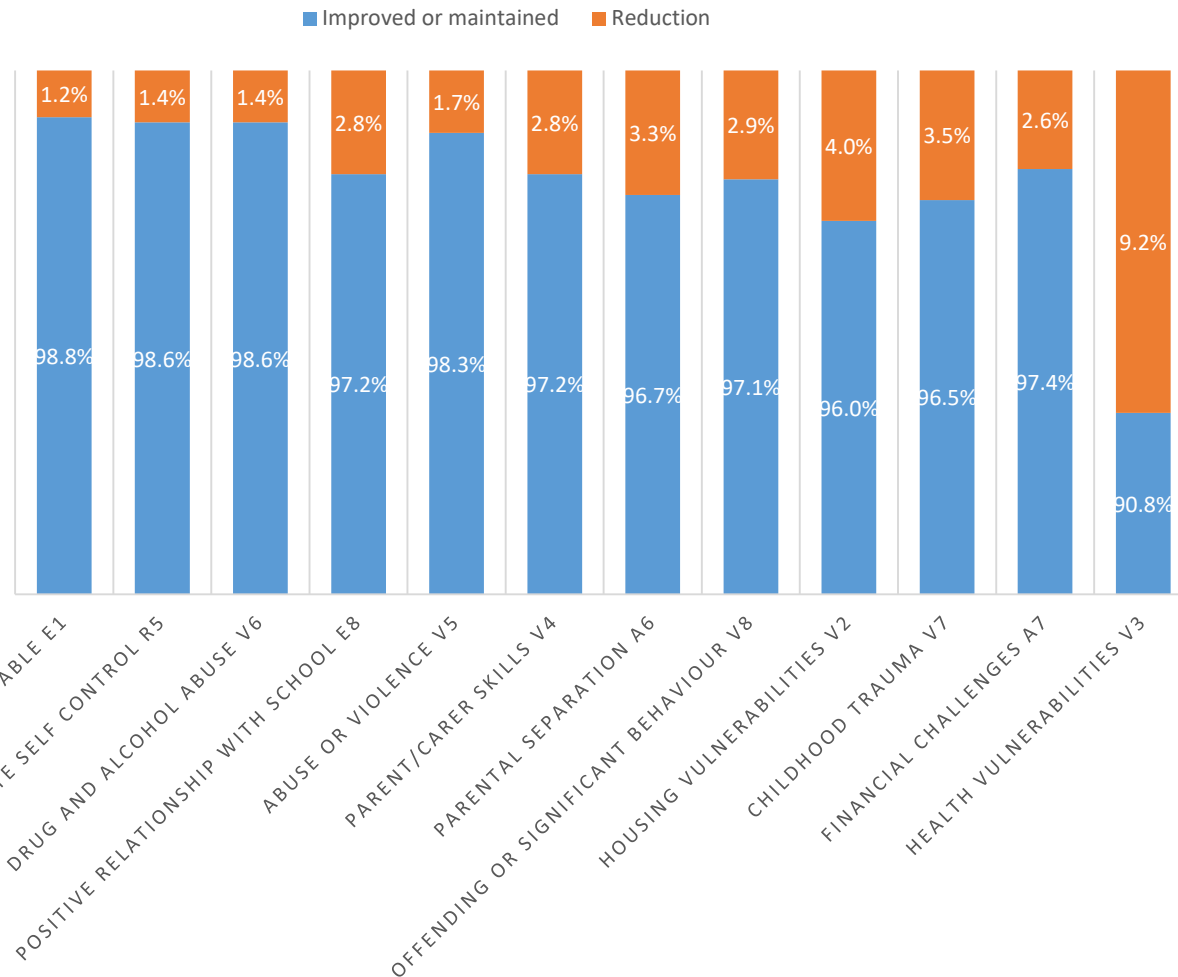
Outcomes Planned exit from RFS



Outcome of RFS Intervention



Enhancing protective factors to mitigate against Adverse Childhood Experiences – 2021/22



The measures in this chart have been identified as areas where improvements can have a significant impact on mitigating against ACE's or reducing the impact of ACES for family members.

The areas where the greatest impact is realised are:

- **Home is safe and suitable** (98.8% improved or maintained)
- **Demonstrate self control** (98.6% improved or maintained)
- **Drug and alcohol use** (98.6% improved or maintained)
- **Abuse or Violence** (98.3% improved or maintained)

RFS is able to demonstrate intervention is disrupting the cycle of impact of ACE's

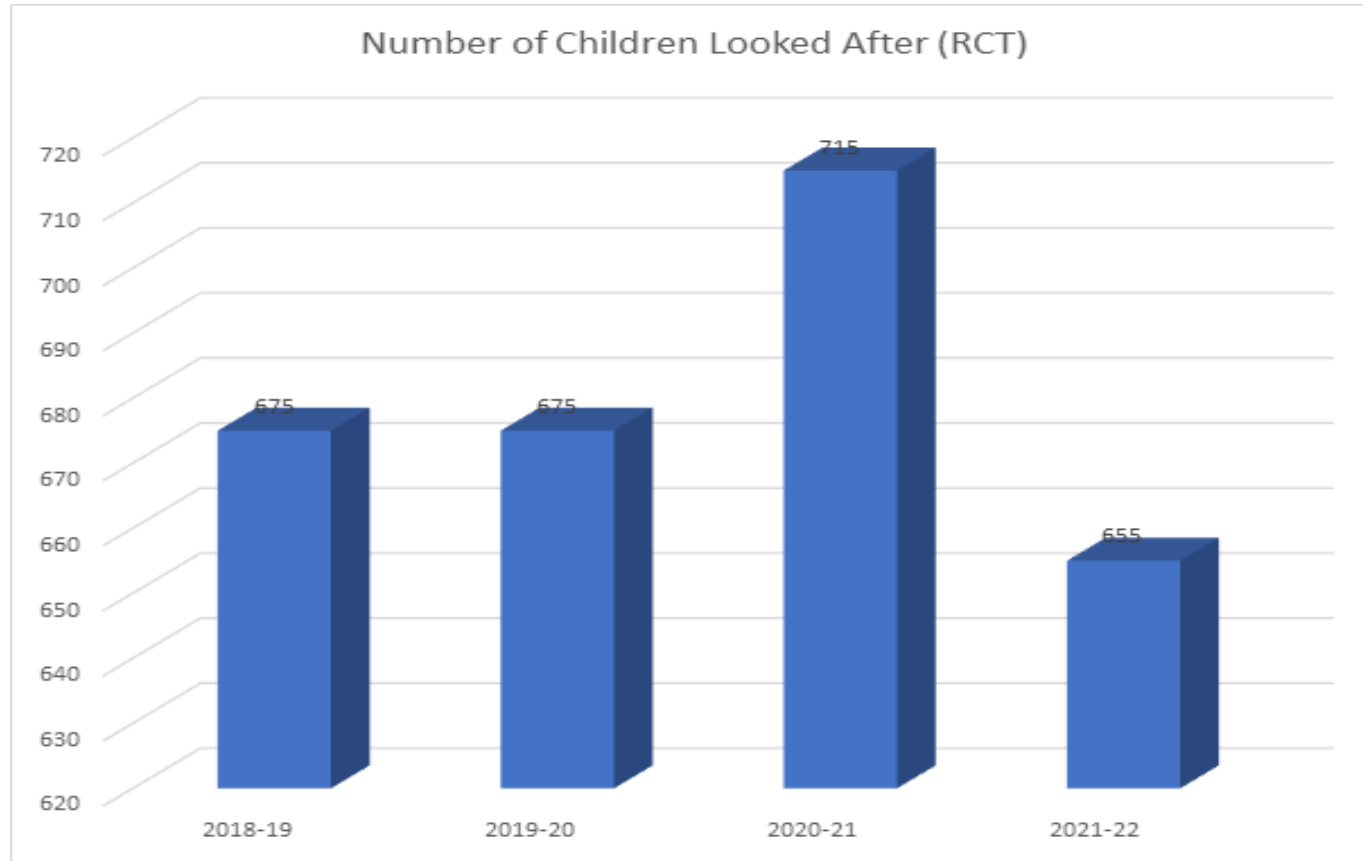
Levels and type of support identified

Analysis of the responses given by families at the assessment stage provide an overview of the type of support needed by families accessing RFS support. The table below presents a comparison of the top 5 areas of need (areas with the highest percentage of families scoring high or very high support requirements during the resilience assessment) for each year and the prevalence of this need

2020-21		2021-22	
Current levels of stress	56.3%	Current levels of stress	69.9%
Requires intense support to address challenges	45.7%	Requires intense support to address challenges	52.6%
Health Issues	41.1%	Mental Health	45.1%
Ability to demonstrate self-control	39.5%	Engagement in leisure/sport/community activities	40.9%
Engagement in leisure/sport/community activities	35.6%	Health Issues	40.8%

This analysis shows a significant increase in stress levels and the need for intense support to address challenges alongside a steep rise in mental health related needs. Of concern is the increase in disengagement in leisure, sport and community activities, which are recognised protective factors to building and maintaining resilience.

Contributing towards reducing the number of Children Looked After



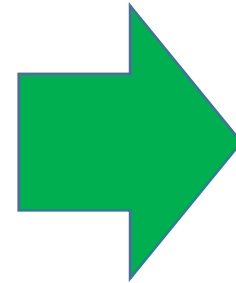
Since the introduction of the RFS in 2018 as a new model for providing early intervention support, the Local Authority has recorded a reduction in the number of Children Looked After.

Whilst the number of Children Looked After in 2020-21 saw an increase from the previous two years, this was proportional to increases across Wales (0.09% increase as a percentage of the Wales total) and impacted by the pandemic. Despite the 2021-22 data not representing the full 12 month period, CLA rates have significantly reduced RFS.

Case study – Family P



- The family unit consists of A (mother), Child B (age 8) & Child C (age 10)
- Referred by Social Worker from Children's Services Enquiry & Assessment Team
- A separated from her husband 5 years ago and the children have had no contact since July 2021. A has requested support around how to start divorce proceedings. A & the children have had previous support from Woman's Aid.
- Family currently without cooker – A had previously been supported by Support Worker from Steps who secured a DAF grant for a cooker, but no further progress made.
- Family are not currently registered with a dentist and want support with this.
- A reports her stress levels are currently high due to her dyslexia and outstanding debts – she will often ignore letters.
- A has experienced a lot of past trauma which has been unresolved / not addressed which impacts on her emotional wellbeing and coping mechanisms A has been known to self harm during times of emotional stress.



FAMILY PLAN GOALS

To support A to seek financial & legal advice

- A referral to CAB for advice & guidance.
- To offer emotional support to A & strategies to promote wellbeing, confidence & resilience as she begins to explore divorce proceedings

To ensure the children are accessing dental hygiene

- I.W. to support A to register the family at a Dentist and explore the possibility of securing an appointment for the family

Support to liaise with Trivallis (steps) and source additional funding for items required

- IW to locate A's cooker (via Steps) and to source additional funding.

Case study – Family P

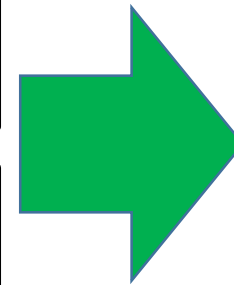


Observations and situation pre involvement

- During first meeting with IW A was observed to be anxious and worried
- A stated that she did not go out, didn't meet or talk to people
- The family had not had cooker since August 2021 (3 months)
- Due to A's dyslexia she was not reading letters being sent – rather throwing them out resulting in further debt
- Benefits stopped due to A not accessing her journal due to her dyslexia.

Examples of work undertaken during intervention

- Supporting A to ring other agencies so that they understand her needs – this resulted in benefits being reinstated and note on system that phone calls required rather than written contact.
- Meeting and breaking down education psychology report into easy to understand language so A understands child's needs.
- Applying for DAF grants to secure cooker and sourcing saucepans, baking trays etc
- Meeting A and children at dentists to improve A' confidence
- Establishing links with local church and sourcing fortnightly food delivery from church for family



Biggest wins

- A went food shopping alone in preparation for Christmas
- A attended school meeting and has built a better working relationship with them.
- A has been able with support to have telephone discussions with other agencies which has resulted in PIP application being made.
- Children have had much needed dental treatment and optician appointments.
- Cooker has been delivered and installed which enables A to cook meals for the family
- A now keeps all letters and files them which enables issues to be dealt with appropriately and timely to minimise debt
- Children's school attendance improved

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH 2022

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Catrin Edwards, Head of Service Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide a summary of the annual school admissions process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

2.1 Acknowledge the contents of the report and consider whether they wish to scrutinise any parts in greater depth.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 A report was provided for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the 26th of February 2020, which detailed the Council's school admissions process. This report provides an update on developments within school admissions in the last 12 months and application date for the forthcoming 2022/2023 admissions year.

4. ADMISSION YEAR 2021/22

4.1 Normal/Routine Admissions

In September of every year individual letters are sent to the parent/carer(s) of every pupil registered in nursery, year 2 in an infant school and year 6. The letter details their User Identification Number and the application process that they need to undertake to apply for a school place for the following September.

Parents/carers have the right to express a preference when selecting a school for their child(ren). If the number of preferences received for a school is below the school's admission number (AN), all applications for admission to the school will be granted.

If the number of preferences received for a school is above the school's AN the published over subscription criteria will be applied, in the priority order listed, to determine the allocation of available places.

Information is also provided to the Welsh medium (WM) primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil and two schools in the Vale of Glamorgan for children who plan to attend schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf (e.g. Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun and Y Pant Comprehensive School).

4.2 Applications for the Academic Year 2021/22

For the academic year 2021/22, the LA processed 9096 applications, of which 7382 (i.e. 81.16%) were applied for on-line. There was 1668 pre-nursery, 2332 nursery, 2361 reception, 68 junior and 2578 year 7 applications.

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf there are 8 voluntary aided (church) schools. The admission arrangements for these schools have been formulated by the schools' governing bodies and requests for admission into these schools are the responsibility of the relevant governing bodies.

Decision letters were issued for applications for year 7 places for September 2021 on the 1st of March 2021. Parents had until the 19th of March 2021 to appeal the decision if their application was unsuccessful.

For nursery, reception and year 3 applications, decision letters were issued on the 19th of April 2021.

The table below provides a summary of the breakdown of the 9096 applications received.

	Pre-Nursery Jan 2022	Pre-Nursery April 2022	Nursery Sept 2021	Reception Sept 2021	Junior Sept 2021	Year 7 Sept 2021	Total
Online	1187	395	1668	1910	61	2161	7382
Paper	52	34	723	493	6	406	1714
Total	1239	429	2391	2403	67	2567	9096
1 st Preference	N/A	N/A	2354	2345	64	2435	7198
2 nd Preference	N/A	N/A	16	27		27	70
Did not take up their offer			21	29	4	105	159
Age ineligible to apply	486	25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	511
School Place	430	175	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	595
REP	278	222	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	500
Parent refused place/no longer required	45	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	62

Of the 7,427 single applications made for nursery, reception, junior and year 7 children, 96.92% were offered their first preference and 0.94% their second. The remaining 159 (2.14%) applications were awarded places but they were not accepted.

For pre-nursery January 2021, 1,239 applications were received. Of these 486, were not eligible as the children were not three years of age between September and December 2021. Of the remaining 753, 430 children were offered places in 61 schools, 278 were offered places across 32 Registered Education Providers (REPs) and a further 45 offers were made but these places were refused by parents/carers as they were not for their preferred place.

For pre-nursery April 2021, 429 applications were received. Of these 25 were ineligible due to age. Of the remaining 404, 175 were offered places in 40 schools, 222 were offered a places across 32 REPs and 7 were offered but refused a place.

4.3 **Appeals Processes**

Parents/carers wishing to appeal against the outcome of their application for secondary admission had until the 19th of March 2021 to notify the LA. It is the parents/carers' responsibility to prove that an appeal request has been sent and therefore parents are strongly advised that all appeal requests are sent via recorded delivery or a tracked e-mail for evidence purposes.

For the September 2022 admission round, the LA received 17 appeals; 7 were successful, 9 unsuccessful and 1 withdrew.

5. **ADMISSION YEAR 2021/22**

5.1 **Late Applications**

For September 2021 applications, a late application will only be accepted by the Admissions Authority when a good reason is given for the lateness of the application (e.g. when a single parent has been ill for some time or a family member has just moved into the area). Where a good reason is given, a late application will be accepted, provided it is received before offers of places are made at the preferred school(s).

5.2 **Parental Responsibility**

Only persons holding responsibility for the named child are able to make an application and they will be required to make a declaration to this effect as part of the application process. Ordinarily, it is expected that this person resides at the same address as the child and is referred to as the parent for admission purposes. Where parental responsibility is equally shared, the Council will ask the child's parents to determine which parent should submit the application. If parents cannot agree and neither has obtained a court order stating who should be making the application, the Council will accept an application from the parent in receipt of Child Benefit for the child. The Council is not in a position to intervene in disputes between parents over school applications and will request that these are resolved privately.

If an application is received from a step-parent, they will need to produce a parental responsibility order confirming that they have parental responsibility. Such documentation is required to proceed with processing the application.

5.3 **All Through Schools**

The parents and carers of children already attending an all through school, do not need to apply for a secondary school place as they will automatically transfer from year 6 to year 7 in the same school, unless they wish to attend a different secondary school.

Children will still have to apply for a pre-nursery, nursery and reception place at the relevant time.

5.4 **Timetable 2022/23**

Each LA must publish an annual composite prospectus which sets out the determined admissions arrangements, including a timetable for the admissions process detailing the relevant dates for the receipt and determination of applications and for the receipt of appeals.

For the academic year 2022/23, the admission timetable is set out in the table below and is published in the Starting Schools booklet.

Admission Cohort	Age of Pupil	Applications Available From	Applications to be Returned By	Decision Notifications Issued
Secondary School - Year 7	12 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	15/10/2021	01/03/2022
Primary School - Year 3 Transfer from Infant to Junior or Primary School	8 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	12/11/2021	19/04/2022
Primary School Reception Class (i.e. age 4 before 01/09/2020)	5 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	12/11/2021	19/04/2022
Primary School Nursery Class (i.e. age 3 before 01/09/2021)	4 th birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/08/2023	02/09/2021	12/11/2021	19/04/2022
Pre-Nursery Admission from January 2023 (Spring Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/09/2022 – 31/12/2023	01/09/2022	30/09/2022	11/11/2022
Pre-Nursery Admission from April 2023 (Summer Term)	3 rd birthday falls between 01/01/2023 – 31/03/2023	02/01/2023	10/02/2023	10/03/2023

5.5 **Waiting List**

Following the allocation of places during the normal admission round, any pupil who is refused admission to an oversubscribed school will be placed on the waiting list. The list will be maintained until the 30th of September (in line with the School Admission Code). Thereafter parents/carers must make a fresh application for

admission (by completing the application form) and/or provide a written request to remain on the waiting list.

Admissions in respect of pupils on waiting lists are determined by application of the over-subscription criteria, not by the length of time a child has been on the waiting list.

5.6 Admissions at Other Times

During the course of any academic year, children transfer between schools due to a number of reasons ranging from house moves and those moving into the County Borough. We advise parents to first contact their present headteacher to alert them of the decision to change schools and then if parents wish to proceed they should contact the School Admissions Team for advice in making the application to the new school.

Between 01/09/2020 and 31/08/2021 there were 1074 primary and 292 secondary in-year transfer (IYT) applications, of which 731 (53.51%) were due to a house move.

Of the total IYTs, 499 (46.46%) of primary and 120 (41.1%) secondary children were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and 36 (3.35%) and 19 (6.5%) were children looked after (CLA).

Number of IYT Primary Applications

Primary	PN/N	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2016/2017	159	134	156	132	128	109	124	68	1010
2017/2018	155	147	151	148	154	125	110	57	1047
2018/2019	133	150	150	174	151	159	131	58	1106
2019/2020	121	102	122	127	110	132	109	51	874
2020/2021	188	177	133	127	131	142	114	62	1074
FSM Children	67	80	71	60	71	68	55	27	499
CLA Children	6	5	3	4	7	5	3	3	36
House moves 2020/21	77	90	71	63	69	68	61	45	544

Number of IYT Secondary Applications

Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
2016/2017	77	87	71	46	18	299
2017/2018	56	66	69	33	4	228
2018/2019	79	75	87	49	8	296
2019/2020	48	65	65	27	8	213
2020/2021	77	84	64	47	20	292
FSM Children	34	35	24	22	5	120
CLA Children	1	5	4	5	4	19
House moves 2020/21	49	55	44	27	12	187

Parents have no legal requirement to provide a reason to transfer their child and the LA can only refuse an application if there are no places available in the selected school.

6. WELSH MEDIUM TRANSFERS

The table below summaries the pupil numbers attending English and Welsh medium schools in RCT on PLASC date 21 (20/04/21).

	English Medium	Welsh Medium	Total	% Welsh Medium
Primary Age	17,537	4,021	21,558	18.65%
Secondary Age	13,889	3,158	17,057	18.52%
Total	31,436	7,179	38,615	18.60%

6.1 Primary Welsh Medium Transfers

During the academic year 2020/21 the LA processed 1074 primary IYTs.

There were a total of 156 WM IYTs; 67 children transferred into a WM primary school and 89 left (i.e. a net reduction of 22, compared to a net increase of 6 in 2019/20).

Of The 89 who left a WM primary school, 45 moved to an English Medium (EM) primary school in RCT.

	Primary	PN/N	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2017/2018	Receiving	6	10	10	7	13	9	15	3	73
2017/2018	Leaving	8	12	14	11	15	17	12	9	88
2018/2019	Receiving	14	8	12	8	9	5	7	2	65
2018/2019	Leaving	6	16	13	10	7	10	17	2	81
2019/2020	Receiving	12	16	11	10	5	11	12	5	82
2019/2020	Leaving	7	8	9	12	10	15	9	6	76
2020/2021	Receiving	16	14	9	6	8	5	5	4	67
2020/2021	Leaving	9	12	13	15	12	14	11	3	89

6.2 Secondary Welsh Medium Transfers

During the academic year 2020/21 the LA processed 292 secondary IYTs.

There were a total of 35 WM IYTs; 8 children transferred into a WM secondary/all through school and 27 left (i.e. a net reduction of 19 compared to a net reduction of 6, in 2019/20).

Of the 27 who left a WM secondary school; 24 moved to an EM secondary school in RCT.

	Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
2017/2018	Receiving	4	1	6	3	0	14
2017/2018	Leaving	4	3	3	1	0	11
2018/2019	Receiving	7	2	4	3	0	16
2018/2019	Leaving	9	15	7	3	0	34

	Secondary	7	8	9	10	11	Total
2019/2020	Receiving	1	3	1	0	1	6
2019/2020	Leaving	1	3	4	2	2	12
2020/2021	Receiving	2	2	4			8
2020/2021	Leaving	9	4	10	2	2	27

6.3 **Year 7 Welsh Medium Applications September 2020**

There continues to be a high level of WM retention between year 6 and year 7. For September 2021; 362 out of the 379 children in year 6 at a WM primary school or WM all-through school in Rhondda Cynon Taf in July 2021, transferred into a WM secondary school or WM all-through school in the County Borough (i.e. 95.5 %) for September 2021.

In the 3 dual language schools, there were 59 children in Welsh medium streams in year 6. Of these 50 transferred into a WM secondary school or WM all through school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (i.e. 84.74%).

In September 2021, 94.06% of children in year 6 WM primary schools or WM dual language schools continued their education in WM secondary schools or WM all through schools.

7. **ADMISSIONS FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

From the 1st of September 2021, section 48 of the 2018 Act requires the governing body of a maintained school in Wales to admit a child to the school if the school is named in the child's individual development plan. This duty applies despite the limits on infant class sizes and even if admitting the child would result in the school exceeding its admission number. The duty to admit applies at all times, including where a school is named in a plan outside the normal admission round.

Schools may only be named for the purpose of securing admission in certain circumstances, so not all individual development plans will name a school in this way. Where a school is named for that purpose, it is named in section 2D.1 of the individual development plan. Where a school is named in an individual development plan for the purpose of securing admission, the admissions provisions in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 do not generally apply [1].

If a child or the child's parent wishes to appeal against the school named in the child's individual development plan for the purpose securing admission, or the fact that no school is so named, the appeal is to the Education Tribunal for Wales.

It is the LA's policy that all children, as far as is possible within the terms of the Education Act 1996, should be educated in mainstream schools within their local communities. If parents/carers feel that their child may have special education needs they should, in the first instance, arrange to discuss their child's difficulties with the headteacher of the child's current school.

There is an expectation that schools adopt a graduated response to meeting a learner's needs in line with the SEN Code of Practice Wales (2002) requirements. For learners with significant or complex needs, referrals should be made to the Access and Inclusion Service, to inform further intervention from the Educational Psychology Service and/or the Learner Support Service. If appropriate, referrals can be made to the relevant LA SEN panel should a specialist placement be required. If the threshold criteria for a specialist placement is met, then placements are agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion Service.

8. FAIR ACCESS PANEL

In April 2018, a Fair Access Placement Panel (FAPP) was established. The forum consists of representatives from schools and the LA who discuss and agree to placements for children deemed to be hard to place for a range of reasons. This has resulted in some of the most vulnerable children being offered suitable school places promptly. For primary school learners requiring a school place, the functions of the FAPP are undertaken by the LA's School Admissions Service, in partnership with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the Access and Inclusion Service.

In the academic year 2020/21, 11 children were brought forward to discuss and placements made. Of the 11, 8 were managed moves, 2 were parental IYT requests and 2 were withdrawn.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The consultation process in respect of the LA School Admissions and School Admission Appeals is undertaken as outlined in the Welsh Government's School Admissions Code.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 The LA's Schools Admissions Policy incorporates the Schools Admissions Code 05/2013, the Schools Admissions Appeals Code 07/2013, the ALNET Act 2018, the code is made under section 84 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and changes to the law on admissions as a result of the implementation of the ALNET Act 2108 Published on the 16th of November 2021.

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 13.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2020–2024 highlights the Council's commitment to delivering three main priorities, namely:
- Ensuring People: are independent, healthy and successful;
 - Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;
 - Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.
- 13.2 This report is linked to ensuring that the Council's School Admissions supports children and their families to be independent, healthy and successful.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The admission of pupils into schools is controlled and administered by the Admissions Authority. For the academic year 2020/21 the LA received 9096 applications, of which 7382 (i.e. 81.16%) were made online.
- 14.2 Of the 7428 applications for nursery, reception, junior and year 7, 96.92% were allocated their first preference school. For children who were not allocated their first preference school, there is an appeal process. There is no appeal for pre-nursery or nursery places. For September 2021, there were 17 appeals, 7 successful, 9 unsuccessful and 1 withdrew.
- 14.3 Between 01/09/2020 and 31/08/2021, there were 1074 primary and 292 secondary IYT applications, of which 544 (50.65%) primary and 187 (64.04%) secondary were due to a house move. An overall total of 53.51%.
- 14.4 Of the total IYT children, 46.46% of primary and 41.1% secondary children were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and 3.35% and 6.5% were children looked after (CLA).
- 14.5 During the academic year 2020/21 there was a net reduction of 22 learners attending the WM primary sector, compared to a net increase of 6 in 2019/20. There was a net reduction of 19 in 2020/21, compared to a net reduction of 6 in 2019/20 in the WM secondary sector.
- 14.6 In September 2021, 94.06% of children in year 6 WM primary schools or Welsh dual language schools continued their education in WM secondary schools or WM all through schools.
- 14.7 Admission to specialist settings is only made if the threshold criteria for specialist placement is met. These placements are agreed and administered by the Access and Inclusion Service.
- 14.8 In the academic year 2020/21, 11 children were discussed at FAPP. The outcome being, 8 managed moves, 2 parental IYT requests and 2 were withdrawn.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE
16TH MARCH 2022
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH MARCH 2022

PERIOD DIGNITY WITHIN SCHOOLS UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Daniel Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Council's progress of tackling period poverty within schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf and to look at the way forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth and matters considered within the report or the remit of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A notice of motion was brought to the Council in July 2017 seeking that the Council will research the availability of free sanitary products, such as tampons and towels, in all secondary schools in the County as an acknowledgement that they are as essential as toilet paper for the personal hygiene of female pupils.
- 3.2 Following agreement for this work, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee established a Scrutiny Working Group to investigate the current approach to the provision and disposal of sanitary products in primary and secondary schools. The Working Group put forward 15 recommendations which received cross-party support when considered by Council.
- 3.3 Cabinet subsequently considered an implementation plan aimed at improving the availability of free sanitary products for female learners in schools, which would make Rhondda Cynon Taf the first Council in Wales to introduce this measure.

- 3.4 Council supported the move in February 2018, which required all schools in RCT with pupils aged nine and above, to provide free sanitary products for female learners to access independently. Cabinet gave final approval at its meeting on Thursday the 19th of April 2018 which saw a six-month trial commencing in the autumn term 2018 to allow time for installation, before a review and subsequent full implementation in April 2019.
- 3.5 The implementation plan outlined a number of key milestones and delivery dates for the introduction of the scheme, which members were provided an update on in March 2019.
- 3.6 A further update was provided to members in November 2019 which considered learner voice, school surveys and the ongoing management of the scheme by the Head of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service, as well as frequent on-site monitoring by School Facilities Services.

4. PERIOD DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS - PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST REVIEW

- 4.1 Free period products have continued to be supplied to all educational settings in RCT utilising a formula to determine the allocated funding based on the number of learners who may menstruate entering Year 6 and above that academic year. This figure is taken from the latest school PLASC returns.
- 4.2 The purchase of period products has been funded year-on-year by Welsh Government grants since the last review. However, the amount allocated by Welsh Government and criteria for spend has changed over the lifetime of the grant funding.
- 4.3 During the initial Covid-19 lockdown, all educational settings were requested to provide a three month product supply to all learners to ensure that their access to period products was not impacted by school closures.
- 4.4 In the 2020/21 financial year, £92,989 was awarded to RCT schools and £17,723 allocated for community use. In the current financial year, the grant funding for Period Dignity in Schools was combined with the Period Dignity in Communities for the first time with local authorities able to determine themselves how much spend is allocated to each area. Of the total £203,701, £42,000 was allocated to the community element of the grant which is controlled by Community Services and the remaining £161,701 was allocated to schools.
- 4.5 The current grant conditions stipulate that a 'minimum of 50% of the total amount spent on period products must be used to purchase eco-friendly period products (i.e., re-usable products and/or plastic free) to allow maximum choice for users. The funding also allows for the purchase of sanitary disposal bags, storage purses/wet bags for use with reusable products, spare clothing (limited to underwear, trousers, skirts and tights) and period product dispensers. Reusable products are not recommended for primary aged children and therefore elements of the grant are tailored to ensure that we meet the 50% requirement via secondary phase allocations.
- 4.6 Neither RCT or Welsh Government endorse any specific reusable or eco-friendly products, but we do provide schools with a list of providers where these products could be sourced to assist them in meeting the grant obligations.

- 4.7 Throughout the lifetime of the scheme, we have maintained central direction over the period product dispensers sourced to ensure they are fit for purpose and fit with the wider design of our school toilet facilities. We have also worked with companies to provide cost effective solutions to school settings of purchasing products. We do not determine the use of suppliers but have negotiated offers and disseminated these details to schools for consideration. The Welsh Government National Procurement Service provides period product information within the core items of their new Cleaning and Janitorial Materials Framework Agreement.
- 4.8 In July 2021, a meeting was arranged with Welsh Government colleagues to discuss the grant funding and associated impact. The concern held at the time was that the grant funding had significantly grown in recent years and by limiting its use to period products, there were potential opportunities around education that would be missed and also an issue schools faced with storage of bulk purchases. The conversation surrounded our desire to use elements of the funding to undertake training within schools (and communities) that would support education on the use of reusable and eco-friendly products to increase the uptake and resources for those who do not menstruate to respect and understand the menstrual cycle and what period experiencing people go through. Many schools have been concerned about purchasing reusable products that may go unused by learners due to a lack of understanding. Schools have also raised the current inability to use the grant for disposal of products which was also raised with Welsh Government at this time.
- 4.9 In October 2021, a grant variation letter was received from Welsh Government which introduced that up to 20% of the total combined grant may be used for the purposes of training or education within schools and communities, for professionals, learners and community members. This must provide information and the opportunity to take home reusable period products.
- 4.10 To date, we have looked to work with other agencies (e.g., Hafod Housing) to source training in this area that is cost effective and have offered this to all schools with secondary-aged pupils in the first instance. We are awaiting uptake of this element before purchasing the training. We are also exploring pilot workshops with 'Behavioural Change' to inform a longer-term training strategy if successful.
- 4.11 In the interim, schools (and the public) have access to resources created by Welsh Government in conjunction with Keep Wales Tidy Eco Schools. This is available via the Hwb 'Busting the Myths' and aims to break down the myths around periods and period products as well as the benefit of sustainable product alternatives.
- 4.12 Since the last review, the Welsh Government Programme for Government 2021-2026 priorities embedding period dignity in schools as well as expanding free period product provision in communities and the private sector. We have formed part of the Welsh Government Roundtable Discussions and the Information and Good Practice Sharing Sessions to highlight the work that RCT has undertaken, and continue to undertake, in this area.
- 4.13 The Sharing Sessions are currently looking at the grant funding arrangements going forward including a Strategic Action Plan and partnerships with key agencies and services who can support this agenda.

- 4.14 One of the main areas of focus is to drive forward pupil voice in this area at a Strategic Level. Pupil voice has been central to the work in RCT and, although various Covid restrictions have made it difficult in the past 18 months to hold our traditional focus groups with learners, this is an area we plan to revisit over the next year to better understand the current needs within our educational settings.
- 4.15 RCT are also involved in the mapping of period product availability across Wales via the NHS Wales Mislif Fi/Bloody Brilliant resource tool. This has been updated with the 113 schools who distribute free period products as well as the 34 community groups/third sector/LA buildings which those on low income including young people can also access for products. It is due for launch in the new financial year and will be enhanced with education resources.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 An Equality and Diversity Assessment has not been carried out in connection with this report as the contents and actions do not require a policy change, resulting in no reasonably foreseeable differential impacts.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has not been carried out in connection with this report as the contents and actions do not require a policy change, resulting in no reasonably foreseeable differential impacts.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The views of schools have been informally gathered throughout the operation of the scheme and used to determine the steer of conversations with those parties involved, i.e., Welsh Government.
- 7.2 It is envisaged that we will revisit learner and school feedback over the next year to determine areas for improvement and focus.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are currently no additional financial implications to the Council beyond the extent of the revenue provided by the Welsh Government grant. If funding was to be withdrawn in the future by Welsh Government, the Council would need to consider whether it wishes to fund the scheme in order to maintain it. At the current time, funding for next year is scheduled for release by Welsh Government.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The implementation of the scheme has a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision specifically the priority of 'People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone'.

- 10.2 Cwm Taf's Wellbeing Plan 2018-2023 is a statement of intent which introduces principles to guide public sector organisations in the region to work together in the future to further develop a collaborative service for "resilient communities that are informed, connected, active and resourced and have the ability to adapt to and influence change and improve wellbeing".
- 10.3 It will also help the Council to meet some of the wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place including 'A more equal Wales' and 'A healthier Wales'.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Based on responses from schools and continued oversight of the scheme, the scheme appears to be well implemented across most schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 11.2 Feedback from schools has indicated the level of funding this year was high and due to the specification of the grant funding it could result in a surplus of products being stored at schools. It is believed that flexibility in the grant conditions to cover education and training, and disposal of products could help ensure there is no waste or bulk storage.
- 11.3 Continued engagement with Welsh Government is planned to ensure that frequent feedback is provided surrounding the scheme and where possible, the scheme is improved for the learners of RCT.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE
16TH MARCH 2022
PERIOD DIGNITY WITHIN SCHOOLS UPDATE
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES