



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CYNGOR BWRDEIS TREF SIROL RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

A virtual meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Board** will be held on

**26 January 2023 at 10.00 am**

**Contact:** Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit, Democratic Services (07385401954)

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**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 approve, as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**(Pages 5 - 10)**

**3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ALNET ACT AND ALN CODE FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, which provides the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the implications of the ALNET Act and ALN Code for Children Looked After and to update members on Year 2 of the national ALN Implementation timetable for Children Looked After with an ALN in RCTCBC.

**(Pages 11 - 22)**

**4. INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS MONITORING REPORT**

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides Members of Corporate Parenting Board with an update and overview on RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for Children Looked After.

**(Pages 23 - 36)**

**5. PARTICIPATION UPDATE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides an update about RCT Children's Services engagement activities and the Participation Strategy for 2023.

**(Pages 37 - 74)**

**6. CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE**

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides the Corporate Parenting Board with the work undertaken by the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service.

**(Pages 75 - 120)**

**7. CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE - ALL WALES PROTOCOL FOR REDUCING THE CRIMINALISATION OF CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2022**

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides the Corporate Parenting Board with information on the All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022.

**(Pages 121 - 150)**

**8. FOSTERING QUALITY OF CARE ANNUAL REPORT**

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides the Corporate Parenting Board with the Fostering Quality of Care Annual Report.

**(Pages 151 - 180)**

**9. TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING UNDER-MENTIONED RESOLUTION:**

"That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 13 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act."

**10. CARN INGLI CHILDREN'S HOME COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION**

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides details of a complaint made in respect of Carn Ingli Children's Home and the subsequent investigation process.

**(Pages 181 - 210)**

**Circulation:**

**County Borough Councillors:**

Councillor G Caple (Chair)  
Councillor R Lewis (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor C Leyshon  
Councillor J Bonetto  
Councillor S Rees  
Councillor S Trask  
Councillor S Evans  
Councillor P Evans

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## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Thursday, 24 November 2022 at 10.00 am.

### **County Borough Councillors - Corporate Parenting Board Members in attendance:-**

Councillor G Caple (Chair)

Councillor R Lewis    Councillor J Bonetto  
Councillor S Rees    Councillor P Evans

### **Officers in attendance**

Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion  
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services  
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor  
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services  
Mr M Free, Service Manager  
Ms M Davies - TGP  
C Emery, Interim Head of Community Safety and Community Housing

### **14 Welcome and Apologies**

The welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board and apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors C. Leyshon, S. Evans and S. Trask.

### **15 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor S. Rees declared the following personal interest in item 6 of the agenda - Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) Annual Report 2021-2022: 'I represent the Executive as a Member of the Panel.'

### **16 Minutes**

To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

### **17 Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru**

Tros Gynnal Plant provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a progress update for the quarter 2 period, which covered July 2022 – September 2022.

Members were informed that during the period 46 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy and 21 were referred for the Active Offer across RCT. The officer advised that 19 care experienced young people and 1 care leaver accessed Issue Based Advocacy, presenting with 21 issues; and 5 care experienced young people were referred for the Active Offer.

Members learned that, during the period, 22 Care Experienced young people became eligible for the Active Offer, 4 Active Offers were delivered by advocates and 4 young people accepted the Active Offer and went on to receive Issue Based Advocacy. This means 23% of eligible young people were referred for Active Offer.

During the period, 6 Care Experienced young people were recorded as rejecting the offer of an Active Offer meeting. The officer explained that the main reason for rejecting the Active Offer was that the young person felt they didn't need the service because they could talk to their social worker or another professional. It was added that 1 young person rejected the Active Offer meeting without a reason but was later referred to the advocacy service.

Members were informed that the most popular issues in need of advocacy support in quarter two, were placement followed by contact and the Social services referral and 'self-referral' is the most popular route into the Issue Based Advocacy service for care experienced young people and care leavers.

The officer went on to provide Members with the statistics for Care Experienced young people accessing Issue Based Advocacy service and those referred for the Active Offer. This included information on age, gender, ethnicity and placement.

The Chair thanked Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru for the informative report and referred to a case study which showed the importance and success of the advocacy service. The Chair questioned if all young people are made aware of the service and it was explained that the Local Authority had worked hard to advertise and promote pathways through practitioners to the valuable service.

Following consideration of the report, the Corporate Parenting Board  
**RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

## **18 Local Authority's Offer of Accommodation and Housing Support Related Services to Care Experienced Young People**

The Interim Head of Community Safety and Community Housing provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the housing and support assistance to young people leaving care for the period 1st April 2022 to the 31st of October 2022.

The officer advised Members of the housing and support options available for young people leaving care:

- Social Housing Homefinder (Allocations) – During the period, 14 care leavers applied to Homefinder and had been assessed as ready to live Independently and registered for housing and placed in Band A. 8 allocations of social housing had been made to care leavers during the period with 2 young people leaving care awaiting a tenancy in a new build project in Taff's Well,
- Private Rented Accommodation – A pilot scheme which aims to improve access and support to private landlords to offer long term affordable and good quality accommodation with support in the private rented sector;
- Housing Related Support Services - RCT currently commission, through Housing Support Grant, wide ranging provision and holistic support services to care leavers and young people aged 16 -25. This includes 28 units of supported accommodation and 11 units of emergency accommodation for young people aged 16- 25. During the period, 45 young people had accessed the 28 supported accommodation units. Of the 45 individuals, 9 were identified as care leavers. To date, officers had helped 32 young people access the 11 emergency units;
- Floating Support - This service helps young people who already have their own accommodations and supports many individuals including young people to further develop their independent living skills and help them to sustain their tenancies. Over the first 7 months of the year, 12 referrals from care leavers were received for tenancy related support and accepted on the scheme;
- Housing First Project - A partnership between RCTCBC and Llamau and provides a person-centred approach for young people who have high support needs and who will find living in supported accommodation and general needs accommodation without support a challenge. The project was currently supporting 10 young people with 4 young people maintaining their tenancies for 6 months or longer at the end of October.
- Supported Lodgings - To provide young people leaving care with a safe home and to offer practical advice and help to manage their lifestyle and become independent. At the time of the meeting, 9 care leavers were currently placed in a supported lodgings placement in Rhondda Cynon Taff; and
- Get Ready and Move on Project (GRAMO) – A project which provides an early intervention pre-tenancy learning environment for all individuals to develop and evidence the skills to manage a tenancy. During the period, 9 care leavers were referred to GRAMO and completed the course.

The officer advised that the provision of Welsh Government funding to increase the supply of both temporary and permanent accommodation had helped. However, despite the financial assistance, there was a limited availability of suitable and affordable accommodation in both the social

and private rented sector, which was having a significant impact on young people being able to leave care in a planned way and to be able to live independently. The officer advised that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to address the immediate housing and support needs of young people leaving care but noted that further work was needed to explore long-term support and accommodation options.

One Member acknowledged the difficulty of finding housing for young people under the Housing First Project and questioned whether the team consider the areas they are placing young people into. The officer advised that in terms of the Social Housing Homefinder option, the young people have a choice of area and can bid on homes when they become available. In terms of the Housing First Project, officers try to place individuals in areas they want to be based on support networks and areas of choice. If the choice isn't available, they sometimes must be placed in alternative areas.

The Chair questioned if there was any opportunity to link with the number of empty properties across the Borough. The officer advised of a Welsh Government initiative called the [Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme](#), which supports a wide range of projects by local authorities and registered social landlords to create much-needed extra housing capacity across Wales.

One Member raised questions in respect of the Private Renting Sector and whether the current financial situation was having an impact on the work undertaken by the service. The officer acknowledged the difficulties of the Private Renting Sector and particularly, the gap between the local housing allowance and the rent shortfall, which was too high for many young people. It was explained that the Council had set up a Social Letting Agency, which allow them to manage the property on behalf of the landlord. The officer explained that although the Agency was doing well and had exceeded Welsh Government's targets, the market was challenging.

Following consideration of the report, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge its information.

## **19 Miskin Annual Report and Therapeutic Families Team Annual Report 2021-2022**

The Service Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the work of the Miskin Teams, Integrated Family Support Team (IFST), Therapeutic Families Team (TFT) set out in the services' annual report for 2021-2022.

The officer provided Members with some background to the Miskin service areas and the principals, values, and purpose, which was to prevent child-parent separation or placement breakdown. Members were



informed that this was done through the deployment of evidence-based, time limited interventions which are co-produced with the family and the referring case worker.

The officer provided Members with some of the feedback of the service users and explained that questionnaires are sent to the referring workers, young people, parents and foster carers. The approximate 25% return rate provided the team with an indication of the benefits of the service and areas to improve upon.

The officer provided an overview of the performance data, a comparison of referrals over the years and the impact of Covid-19.

The Chair referred to the service user quotes on page 9 and praised the staff for such rewarding work. Referring to parental substance misuse, mental health and domestic violence, the Chair questioned whether there had been an increase in those referrals since the pandemic. The officer advised that there hadn't necessarily been an increase, as they had always been prevalent in the vast majority of referrals and informed the Board, that one of the highest areas in RCT was parental alcohol misuse.

Following consideration of the report, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge its content.

**20 Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) Annual Report 2021-2022**

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with the Regional Adoption Collaboration Annual Report.

Members were informed that, during the period, the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) approved a significant pool of adopters with the result that more children can be placed within the region. The need however, to continue to recruit more adopters for more complex children remained a priority for VVC. Adoption Support represented a large set of challenges for VVC and the need to reduce the waiting list for services and to ensure that the service was targeted to those most in need remained a priority.

One Member commented, that as a Panel Member, social worker input was valued at meetings and encouraged their attendance but recognised how heavy their workload was.

The Chair thanked the Service Director for the report and the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the information contained within the report.

**21 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:**

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

## **22 Fostering Wales - Fostering Friendly Employer /Charter**

The Foster Wales Regional Development Manager provided an update to the Corporate Parenting Board about the recruitment and retention of foster carers, with a particular focus on the regional front door for fostering recruitment and the changes to operational delivery within fostering recruitment.

Following consideration of the exempt report, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

1. To note for information the changes to fostering recruitment and the performance information provided.

## **23 Social Services Quarterly Complaints and Compliments**

The Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation of effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, as well as detailing Councillor, A.M and M.P enquiries and the number of complaints received.

Following consideration of the exempt report, Members **RESOLVED**:

1. To note its content; and
2. That additional training should be provided to all Elected Members, in respect of the risks of submitting complaints to the CRM in their capacity as Councillors on behalf of family members.

## **24 Regulation 73 Reports**

The Residential Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the Regulation 32 visits undertaken at the children's homes – Beddau, Bryndar, Nantgwyn and Ty Brynna during April – October 2022.

The officer outlined a summary of the inspection outcomes and it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the report.

**This meeting closed at 11.32 am**

**Cllr G Caple (Chairman)**



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**23<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY 2023**

#### **UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (ALNET) ACT 2018 AND ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) CODE 2021 IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR R LEWIS)**

**AUTHOR:** Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Board on the implications of the ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) Wales Act (2018) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 for Children Looked After with an ALN and to update the Board on the implementation of the above in Year 2 of the National ALN Implementation timetable in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- I. Acknowledge the content of the report.
- II. Agree to receive a further report on ALNET (Wales) Act and ALN Code implementation for Children who are Looked After at a later date if necessary.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 This is an information report.

#### **4. BACKGROUND/WIDER CONTEXT**

- 4.1 The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Wales Act (2018) came into force in September 2021 in year one of a three-year phased implementation plan. The ALN Implementation timetable extends from September 2021 to August 2024 by which time the ALNET Act will be fully enacted having replaced the current outgoing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. The Act is supported by the implementation of a new statutory ALN Code.
- 4.2 Under the new legislation all children and young people with ALN regardless of the severity or complexity of their learning difficulty or disability will be entitled to a statutory support plan called an 'Individual Development Plan' (IDP). Children and young people with an ALN will receive support called additional learning provision (ALP) which will be set out in their IDP.
- 4.3 The transformed system is intended to:
- ensure that all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential;
  - improve the planning and delivery of support for learners from 0 to 25 with ALN, placing learners' needs, views, wishes and feelings at the heart of the process; and
  - focus on the importance of identifying needs early and putting in place timely and effective interventions which are monitored and adapted to ensure they deliver the desired outcomes.
- 4.4 The new statutory framework is underpinned by three overarching objectives:
- A unified legislative framework to support all children of compulsory school age or below with additional learning needs (ALN) and to support young people with ALN who are in school or further education (FE);
  - An integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring of the support provided to ALN learners which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions; and
  - A fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals.
- 4.5 These in turn are supported by a further eleven core aims within the Act:
- The introduction of the term 'additional learning needs (ALN)';
  - A 0 to 25 age range;
  - A unified, single statutory plan;
  - Increased participation of children and young people;
  - High aspirations and improved outcomes;
  - A simpler and less adversarial system;
  - Increased collaboration;
  - Avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution;
  - Clear and consistent rights of appeal;
  - The ALN Code;
  - A bilingual system.

- 4.6 The implementation phases over the 3-year period are summarised below in Table 1:

**Table 1: Implementation Phases of the ALNET Transformation Programme**

<b>Implementation Phases</b>	<b>Transfer to ALN System for learners currently at School Action/School Action Plus (mandated year groups)</b>	<b>Transfer to ALN system for learners with statements of SEN (mandated year groups)</b>
Year 1 2021/2022	Nursery, Y1, Y3, Y5, Y7, Y10	N/A
Year 2 2022/2023	Nursery, Y2, Y4, Y6, Y8, Y10, Y11	Nursery, Reception, Y6, Y10, Y11
Year 3 2023/2024	Nursery, Y2, Y4, Y6, Y8, Y10	Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5, Y6, Y8, Y9, Y10

Any child who has a newly identified ALN during the 3-year period above will automatically access the new ALN system.

- 4.7 The legislation differs in some key aspects for children who are looked after who have additional learning needs as opposed to those who are not looked after.
- 4.8 The definition of a child who is looked after by a local authority is slightly different to that in the Social Services and Well-being (SSWB) (Wales) Act 2014. Chapter 1 of the ALN Code states that, for the purposes of the Code and the Act, a child is looked after by a local authority if they are a child who is looked after by a local authority for the purposes of Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and not a detained person. However, a child is not looked after for the purposes of the Code and the Act if a personal education plan is not required to form part of the child’s care and support plan under section 83 of the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014.
- 4.9 Therefore the definition of a child being looked after is narrower than under the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014, in particular, a young person above compulsory school age who is looked after for the purposes of Part 6 of that 2014 Act is not looked after for the purposes of the Code and the Act.
- 4.10 Under the new ALN legislation, all children with an identified ALN must have an Individual Development Plan (IDP). This is a statutory plan which provides an overview of the child’s additional learning needs and details the additional learning provision that the child requires in their educational setting.
- 4.11 There are two types of IDP – school-based and local authority maintained IDPs. In general, children who are educated in a mainstream setting will have a school-based IDP whereby the additional learning provision detailed in the IDP is provided by the school from their own resources. Children with more severe and complex needs who are educated in specialist educational settings will have a local authority maintained IDP that is written, maintained and reviewed by local authority education services.

- 4.12 However, in the case of children who are looked after, the duty to decide whether a child who is looked after has ALN and to prepare and maintain an IDP for the child falls under the remit of the local authority, irrespective of the level of need of the child. The rationale for this is to allow for a more holistic approach to meeting the educational and other needs of children looked after with ALN. Therefore, in the instance that a maintained school has concerns that a child who is looked after may have ALN, there is a statutory requirement upon the school to refer the child's case to the local authority that looks after the child. The same duty also applies to the local authority responsible for a child who is looked after by another local authority.
- 4.13 Where a child is looked after 'out of county', the local authority that looks after the child maintains its statutory duty to decide whether the child has an ALN and, if so, to maintain and review the IDP. The exception is where a child looked after is in the area of a local authority in England. Local Authorities in England are not required to compile an IDP as they are bound by the EHCP process, however RCT works with the individual LAs to encourage them to use our processes.
- 4.14 Regardless of whether a child looked after is educated within or outside of the local authority that looks after the child, the Code states that the school where the child is registered has a duty to take all reasonable steps to help the local authority secure the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) specified in the IDP.
- 4.15 Another key difference in respect of children who are looked after who have an ALN is that their IDP must be incorporated into their Personal Education Plan (PEP). This allows for the child's ALP and wider educational provision to complement one another. It also facilitates a holistic approach to planning the child's care as the PEP forms part of the child's care and support plan, including matters relating to health, emotional and behavioural development. As such, the statutory IDP template for children looked after varies slightly to the general IDP template to dovetail with the PEP and avoid duplication.
- 4.16 All IDPs are subject to review in line with the Code and a review has to be undertaken at least annually. However, in the case of a CLA LA maintained IDP it is recommended that the IDP review is undertaken alongside the PEP review as they are intrinsically linked within the new Act. This then allows for any changes in placement to be reflected in the ALP.
- 4.17 Depending on the circumstances, where the local authority is responsible for maintaining an IDP for a child or young person ceasing to become looked after, if the child or young person is a registered pupil at a maintained school or enrolled as a student at a further education college, the local authority can consider whether the child / young person's additional learning provision can be met under a school-based or college based IDP. If appropriate, the responsibility will transfer to the school or college.
- 4.18 Central to the implementation of the new ALN legislation is the requirement to take a person-centred approach to meeting the needs of children and young people. This approach reinforces the importance of the voice of the child / young person in the choices and decisions made for them and promotes more effective collaboration between the child/young person, parents / carers and other relevant stakeholders.

- 4.19 A key element of the person-centred approach is the person-centred meeting that takes place at the beginning of the IDP process, where all stakeholders are invited to participate, and in particular the child/young person and their parents / carers. The 'About Me' profile is a key focus of the meeting to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the child/young person in relation to what is important to them and for them, including relationships, and their aspirations for the future. This approach is of particular benefit to children who are looked after as, when done effectively, will enable them to feel valued and empowered to have a voice in their educational provision.

## **5. LOCAL CONTEXT & UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION**

- 5.1 Although the Act and the Code set out the statutory responsibilities of local authorities, schools and the Health Board in relation to the new ALN system, it is for each local authority to develop and implement their own processes and procedures to ensure that they can fulfil their new statutory duties.
- 5.2 Prior to the implementation of the new ALN system, Education Services worked collaboratively with Children's Services to develop an agreed process that ensures compliance with the requirement to incorporate the IDP within the PEP. (See CLA IDP Process Maps at Appendix 1a & 1b).
- 5.3 As noted above, the Person-Centred Meeting is central to the development of the IDP. To facilitate a joint PEP and IDP meeting where a child looked after has an ALN, Access and Inclusion has developed an interactive electronic PEP & IDP tool that is completed during the Person-Centred Meeting and submitted to the local authority for the relevant Access and Inclusion officers to draft an IDP.
- 5.4 The tool has two parts: Part 1 PEP: this allows schools to complete an electronic PEP which can be continuously updated throughout the pupil's education journey. If a potential ALN is identified, then Part 2 of the tool is completed. This section provides information to LA officers regarding the additional learning needs of the pupil and the additional learning provision required to meet their needs. This information is then reviewed and used to write the IDP if it is agreed an ALN is evident.
- 5.4 The Virtual School for Children Looked After supports schools in facilitating PCP Meetings when required. The relevant Access and Inclusion Officers who draft the IDPs for 'in county' CLA pupils are the Additional Learning Provision Co-ordinators (ALPCos) and for the CLA pupils residing 'out of county' it is the responsibility of the Virtual School to draft the IDP.
- 5.5 There is a rigorous Quality Assurance Process which takes place before the Draft IDP is shared with the learner, parent/carer and school. For CLA IDPs written by the ALPCos the Virtual School Headteacher quality assures the document and for the CLA IDPs written by the Virtual School the ALPCos undertake the quality assurance. Robust communication is key when quality assuring all IDPs. All contributing parties to PCP/IDP process have five working days to respond to the draft IDP – either agreeing to its content or suggesting amendments, in line with the RCT process maps. Following this

period of consultation and any subsequent amendments being completed/agreed the Final IDP should be issued within 12 weeks of the date the pupil was identified as potentially having an ALN.

- 5.8 As at the 18<sup>th</sup> January there are 468 CLA pupils of statutory school age. All of these pupils will require a PEP, however only a small number will have an ALN and need to transfer to the new ALN system, requiring a LA maintained IDP. Table 2 below reports the SEN status of the current CLA cohort.

**Table 2: SEN status of CLA Statutory Aged Pupils as at 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

SEN/ALN status	RCT CLA pupils attending RCT provision	RCT CLA pupils attending OOC provision
School Action	11	7
School Action Plus	34	5
Statemented	53	22
No SEN	246	65
Have or are currently transferring to ALN system	17	8

*Please note that in terms of ALN reforms we have two groups of pupils: those in both mandatory and non-mandatory year groups and this will impact on when they are required to transfer. Please refer to table 1 above*

- 5.9 To date Access & Inclusion have issued 6 IDPs in relation to CLA pupils who have been newly identified as having an ALN (i.e. these pupils were not previously on the SEN system). Of this total 84% have been issued within the required 12 weeks deadline. It is noted 4 were issued for pupils attending out of county provision (OOC).
- 5.10 In line with the 3 year ALN implementation plan, during academic year 2022/23, 375 RCT statemented pupils are in the mandatory years so will therefore move from the old SEN system to the new ALN system this academic year. Of these 43 were CLA as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022: 20 of which attend RCT provision and 10 attend out of county (OOC) provision. In addition, 13 are CLA attending RCT provision but looked after to another LA and therefore not the responsibility of RCT to transfer. To date, 5 CLA statemented pupils have transferred to the ALN system, 14 CLA pupils who were on the SEN system at School Action/School Action Plus have also been transferred to the new system.
- 5.10 The Virtual School has strengthened the out of county monitoring protocol. All education settings are now required to submit either a termly monitoring proforma which is reviewed by the Virtual Headteacher or attend a meeting with a member of the Virtual School Team to review pupil progress. Should any concerns be identified then actions will be agreed and progress against those actions closely monitored.



- 5.6 Successful transition to post-16 education and training takes careful planning and involves a number of partners, especially for looked after children. They may need extra support and encouragement to make a successful transition to the sixth form, Further Education colleges or other post 16 provisions. Post-16 providers and interested parties should create gateways to learning beyond 16.
- 5.7 In response to the transition implications of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 the Local Authority has an Additional Learning Needs Project Lead Officer for Post-16 Transition and Further Education. Working in collaboration with the Virtual School, an Enhanced Transition Protocol Pilot Project is being rolled out in two secondary schools in Aberdare. Vulnerable learners including CLA are screened during a multi-agency transition screening meeting (MATSM). The aim is to share information between key partners and use this to identify learners who are likely to need full enhanced transition arrangements to FEI including a multi-agency Person Centred Planning meeting and written transition plan and learners who are likely to need some level of support with transition to Further Education Institutions in addition to universal arrangements.
- 5.7 The Virtual School continues to work closely with the Designated Officers for CLA across all four campus' of Coleg Y Cymoedd. In line with the ALN Code the Local Authority, schools and colleges must wherever possible ensure young people are able to attend their post-16 education and training locally. A specialist post-16 college placement may be considered when a learner's needs are so complex that appropriate local provision cannot be found. The Virtual School offers support and guidance to pupils, carers, parents and schools in these cases.

## **6. NEXT STEPS**

During this academic year, Access and Inclusion and the Virtual School will continue to support pupils, parents/carers and education settings to navigate the new ALN legislation by:

- Continuing to monitor the effectiveness of the new PCP tool to ensure the PEP and IDP reflect the most up to date information and incorporate best practice in pupil voice
- Ensuring CLA LA maintained IDPs are issued in a timely manner to ensure appropriate provision is in place to support the pupil's progress
- Supporting schools to undertake the IDP review process
- Providing Drop-In sessions for schools to facilitate discussions regarding individual CLA pupils and their ALN
- Implementing a robust Out of County tracking protocol to ensure our most difficult to reach learners are fully supported to transition from the SEN to ALN system
- Continuing to provide high quality PEP training and ongoing support to the Designated Persons for CLA in order to ensure CLA pupils with/without an ALN have access to a co-constructed curriculum reflective of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner

- Providing training to school Governors so they are aware of their responsibilities to CLA learners with ALN

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 This is an information report.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

8.1 This is an information report.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 This is an information report.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

10.1 The legal requirements for children who are looked after who have special educational needs or an additional learning need are set down within the Education Act 1996, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act (Wales) 2018 and the associated statutory Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code (Wales) 2021.

## **11. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT 2015**

11.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025 and its mission: '*To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all*', most notably:

- Strategic Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
- Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families

11.2 The information in the report contributes to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan, 'Making a Difference'.

11.3 The implementation of the new Welsh Government ALN legislation and the processes and systems developed at a local Council level will ensure that some of RCTCBC's most vulnerable learners will have the best chance of achieving positive outcomes.

11.4 The above also contributes in particular to the following wellbeing goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales

- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities

11.4 Organising services so that they are focussed on early intervention and prevention is a key statutory requirement of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015<sup>1</sup> and a key element of RCTCBC's Corporate Plan.

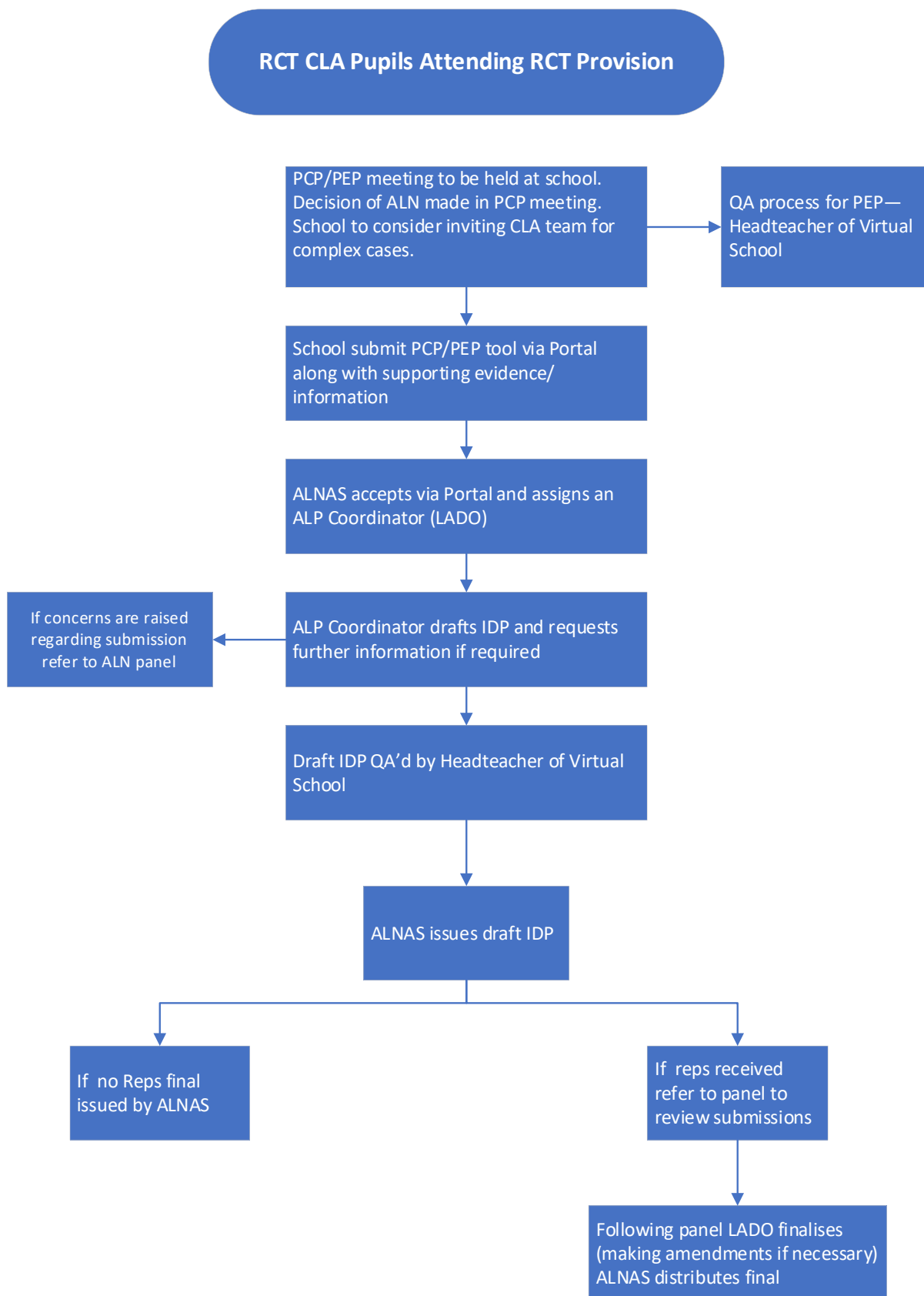
## 12. **CONCLUSION**

15.1 From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 Rhondda Cynon Taf has been under a statutory duty to implement the national three-year ALN implementation programme. To date, RTCBC's Access and Inclusion Service has successfully implemented Year 1 and mid-point of Year 2 of the implementation programme for children who are looked after with additional learning needs.

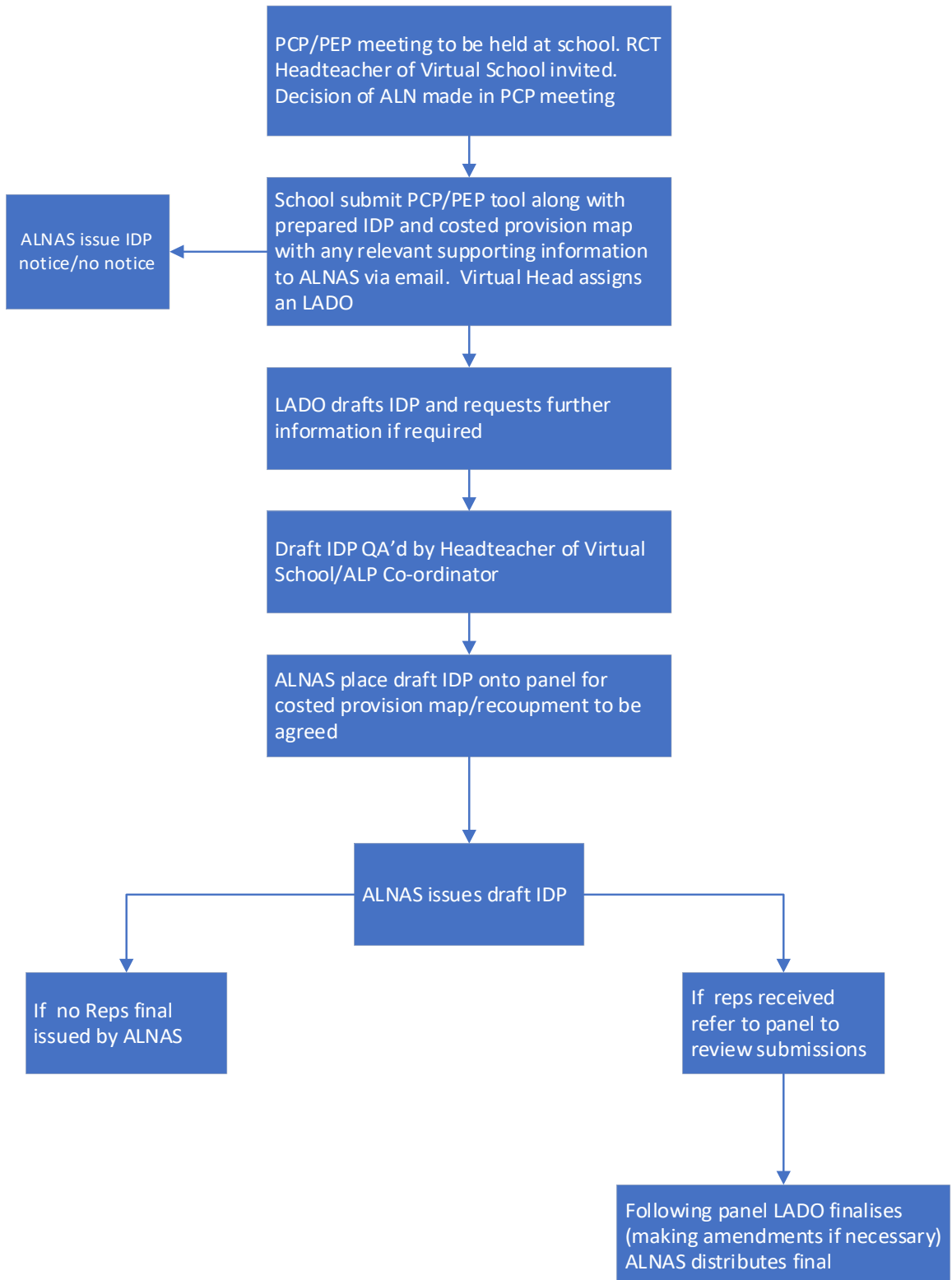
15.3 The Access and Inclusion Service is committed to implementing the remainder of the three-year ALN implementation programme to ensure that RCTCBC can meet its statutory duties in relation to providing high quality additional learning provision to all of its children looked after who have additional learning needs.

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<sup>1</sup> [Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015](#)



**RCT CLA Pupils Attending Out of County Provision**



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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023

#### INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS MONITORING REPORT

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH  
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

**Author(s): Claire Williams, Head of Family Support and Accommodation**

**Addendum Report compiled by Karen Benjamin, Regional Commissioning  
Manager, Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4c's)**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to provide members with an overview and update on RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for children looked after.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that corporate parenting board members note the contents of the report and the actions being taken to ensure RCT obtain quality external placements for children.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure members in their role as corporate parents are assured children looked after, placed with external providers, receive quality placements. Also that these placements are adequately monitored on cost and quality through monitoring of placement commissioning.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

In order to offer a range of suitable placement accommodation for Children looked after by the Local Authority it has been necessary for us to commission placements with external fostering and residential providers as well as using our in-house placement capacity.

Our priority is always to place children in the most suitable placement to meet their needs. RCT has a range of placement provision including fostering and residential services and has over recent years developed our in-house services to better meet the range of children's needs, however, we continue to need to commission external placements due to increasing demand.

External placement provision is provided by agencies which are either voluntary organisations, not for profit companies or private for profit companies.

Our aim, in line with Welsh Government Policy, is to move to a not for profit provision of placements for looked after children in RCT. The timeline proposed for this transition is within the next four years and in response, RCT has developed a Residential Transformation Strategy to develop provision based on a detailed analysis of need, review of research and literature and with council wide input to support our vision.

The vision for this strategy is that by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027, all RCT young people who need residential care are looked after close to home in high quality settings where they can thrive, and that they are looked after by a stable, resilient, skillful and well supported staff group.

The attached report compiled by 4C's provides a summary of RCT external placement activity. The key themes are:

- RCT continues a 5-year trend of commissioning the majority of independent placements from framework providers.
- RCT is commissioning very few non-framework foster placements and the percentage remains low and consistent with the Welsh trends.
- RCT is commissioning more non-framework residential placements. Due diligence checks and contracts are imperative with non-framework providers who are not subject to quality assurance and monitoring by 4Cs. Proactive monitoring is essential to good outcomes for CLA.
- As a Host Authority for foster and residential placements, RCT is home to more providers, both framework and non-framework, since the report to Corporate Parenting in Spring 2020. However, the placements are occupied by RCT young people and from across 19 other LA's at present.
- Placement availability and sufficiency remain a key concern across Wales and the UK at this time. Occupancy levels are high. There is a shortage of placements able to meet the needs of children and young people at the highest end of the continuum of needs with evidence-based models of care.
- Overall capacity in Wales increased between 2016 – 2021 but hasn't kept pace with increased demand.



As at **15/10/22** RCT had placed **109** children and young people within the external independent fostering sector (**17%** of total CLA population) and **49** children young people within the external residential care sector (**8%** of total CLA population). The table below shows a breakdown of where children are placed as at 15/10/2022:

<b>Placement Type</b>	<b>15/10/2022</b>	<b>%</b>
Foster Care - Independent Sector	109	17%
In Foster Care - RCTCBC Carers	157	25%
Relative Foster Carers	215	34%
Placed For Adoption	15	2%
Placed With Parents	70	11%
Residential Care Independent Sector	49	8%
Residential Care provided by RCT	11	2%
Educational Accommodation	1	0.2%
Supported Lodgings	7	1.1%
Parent & Child Foster Placement	4	0.6%
Parent & Child Unit	1	0.2%
Youth Offending Institute	1	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>	

Where Independent sector placements are needing to be commissioned, the majority continue to be within Wales.

<b>Out of County</b>	<b>2021-22</b>		<b>2022-23</b>	
	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>
<b>Inside Wales</b>	156	156	149	138
<b>Outside of Wales</b>	9	12	13	13
<b>Total</b>	165	168	162	151
<b>% Outside of Wales</b>	5%	7%	8%	9%

Where there are concerns regarding the quality of care with providers RCT use the issues and concerns process co-ordinated by 4c's to ensure these are addressed. During the full reporting year 2021/22 RCT initiated 5 reports via the national issues, concerns and compliments process.

4c's complete an outcomes survey annually which the attached report outlines. One recommendation from 4c's was regarding increasing social worker

feedback during 2020. The update in this report shows that RCT SW feedback has increased significantly to enable improved analysis of placement outcomes.

We recognise the impact on children and young people being placed out of county particularly in terms of education and learning. Where there are incidences of children being unable to access education this is addressed through our Multi Agency Placement Panel (MAPP).

## **5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

This report is for information only therefore an equality and diversity assessment is not required.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

This report is for information only no consultation is required.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report for the council.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

The legal requirements for children looked after are set down within Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act (2014)

## **9 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

The appropriate placement of children looked after will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of 'a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all'; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of 'People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and 'Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work'.

It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

1. A more equal Wales
2. A healthier Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities



## **10 CONCLUSION**

Children's services continue to experience pressures in terms of identification of suitable placements for children and young people. The lack of placement sufficiency and choice across RCT and the wider geographic area has implications both for children and young people who may not be able to live within their local community and financially due to increased costs of placements by external providers.

Through the implementation of our Residential Transformation Action Plan and support of the 4C's service for robust, targeted commissioning our aim is to increase not for profit placement sufficiency and specificity within RCT.

Ensuring choice and suitability of placements will assist in addressing identified care and support needs and achieve the best possible outcomes for the child or young person to live successfully in their communities.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023**

**REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH  
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE**

Item: **INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS MONITORING REPORT**

**Background Papers**

Officer to contact: Claire Williams, Head of Family Support and Accommodation



Consortiwm Comisiynu  
Cymru ar gyfer Plant  
Childrens' Commissioning  
Consortium Cymru  
Cydwethio Er Gwell • All Together Better

## **INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**DATE 16.01.23**

This report is prepared by 4Cs at the request of RCT Childrens Services.

# INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS

## PREVIOUS REPORTS

Title	Date
Commissioning of Independent Placements	Dec 2017
Commissioning & QA of Independent Placements	Sept 2018
RCT as a Host Authority of Independent Placements	Sept 2019
Independent Sector Placements	March 2020

## 4Cs LOCAL ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF RCT 2021/22

Activity Description
Local and regional 360-degree outcomes reporting
Quality assurance and escalating concerns processes
Placement team support and training
Facilitating provider engagement events
UASC placement support via the NTS

## BROADER LOCAL, REGIONAL & NATIONAL WORK

Activity	Date (s)
Issues Concerns & Compliments Reports	Monthly
Issues Concerns & Compliments Thematic Trends	Quarterly
Regional PACE & Remand Pilot	2020/21
Young Commissioners Work Programme	Ongoing
All Wales Referrals & Direct Work Reports	Monthly
Programme for Government Workstream Support	Ongoing
Steering Group Facilitation & Regional Workshops on Reducing Criminalisation via Implementation of the National Protocol	Ongoing
UASC Regional Development	Ongoing
* For additional activity across the Consortium please refer to 4Cs work programme	

## RCT COMMISSIONED INDEPENDENT PLACEMENT PROFILE

As recorded by RCT placement team on the Childrens Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR) on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Active Placements	Framework	Non-Framework	Total
Foster	110	5	115
Residential	38	20	58
<b>Total</b>	148	25	173

86% of RCT's total independent placements are with quality assured framework providers evaluated by the 4Cs.

RCT continues a 5-year trend of commissioning the majority of independent placements from framework providers. This assists with quality assurance monitoring, standardised terms and conditions, plus scrutiny of cost versus price. There is minimal non-framework commissioning of foster care placements however, RCT continues to commission a higher-than-average proportion of non-framework residential placements, despite having a greater number of framework residential providers operating within the Authority boundaries.

## HOST AUTHORITY INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS

As a Host Authority for foster and residential placements, RCT is home to more providers, both framework and non-framework, since the report to Corporate Parenting in Spring 2020.

Framework Provider		Non Framework Provider	
Foster	Residential	Foster	Residential
Action for Children	Aropa Care	SAfER Fostering	Rainbow Therapeutic Limited
Barnados	Avisant		Genus Care
Calon Cymru	Keys PCE		
Compass Fostering	Midway Transitional		
FCA	Orbis Education and Care		
Foster Care Group Wales	Priority Childcare		
SFS	Phoenix Learning & Care		
TACT			
Foster Care Cooperative			
NFA			
TLC			

Regulatory use of Location Assessments for residential care homes are still due to be introduced by Welsh Government but no timescales are confirmed for this proposed amendment to RISCA. The introduction of the location assessment tool will assist with ensuring developments are in the right locations to meet the needs of children looked after.



Placement availability in RCT is self-reported by independent providers as detailed. (16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 snapshot).

Placement availability and sufficiency remain a key concern across Wales and the UK at this time. Occupancy levels are high. There is a shortage of placements able to meet the needs of children and young people at the highest end of the continuum of needs with evidence-based models of care.

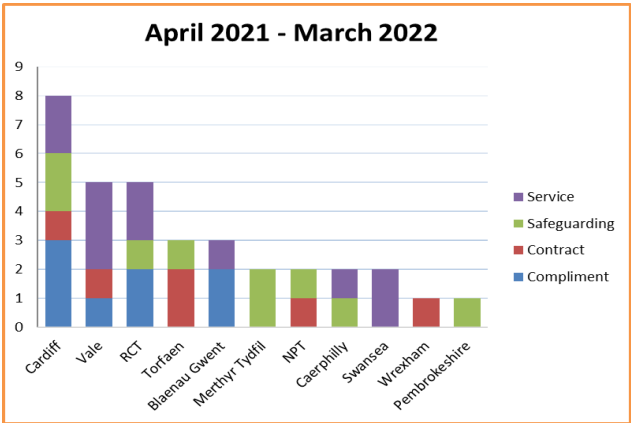
Overall capacity in Wales increased between 2016 – 2021 but hasn't kept pace with increased demand.

RCT is host to placements made by the following Local Authorities (16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 snapshot):

Blaenau Gwent	Flintshire	Newport
Bridgend	Gloucestershire	Pembrokeshire
Caerphilly	Gwynedd	Shropshire
Cardiff	Merthyr Tydfil	Swansea
Carmarthenshire	Monmouthshire	The Vale of Glamorgan
Devon	Neath Port Talbot	Torfaen

Cardiff is the second largest placing authority within RCT boundaries after RCT itself.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS (FRAMEWORK & NON-FRAMEWORK).**



During the full reporting year 2021/22 RCT initiated 5 reports via the national issues, concerns and compliments process. The reasons for these are detailed opposite. There are 4 levels of classification; critical failure, below expectation, meets expectation, exceeds expectation. There are 3 levels of reporting: safeguarding, contract, and service. So far in 2022/23 RCT have initiated 3 reports.

34 contracting monitoring visits were completed by 4Cs between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022 with



22 physical visits and 12 virtual visits. 1 visit was postponed due to a positive covid test and another due to a severe weather warning.

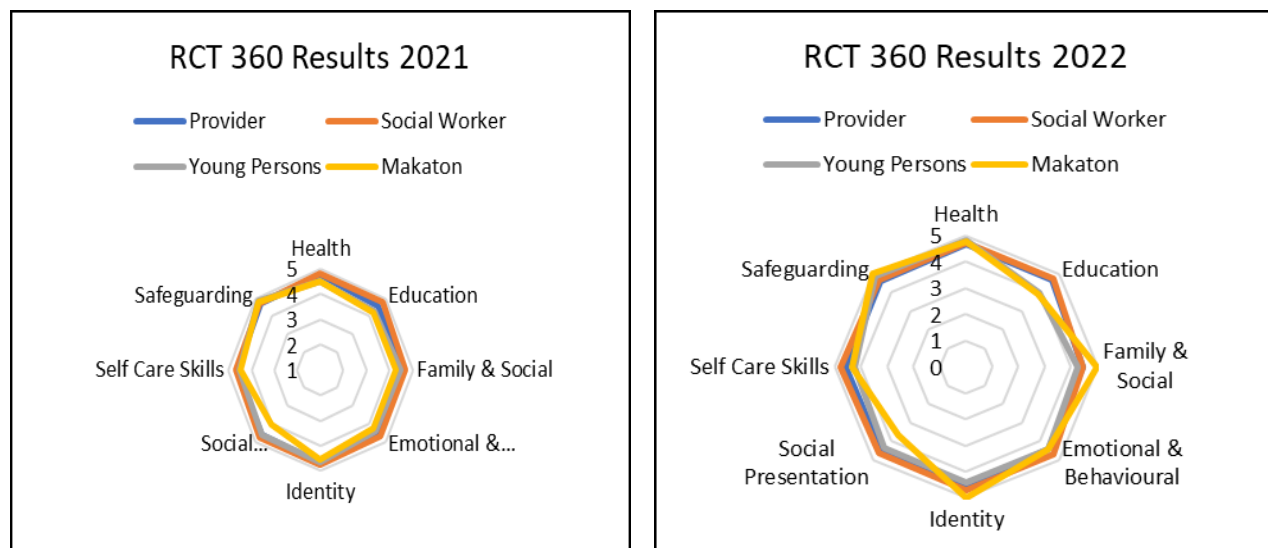
In the first 3 quarters of 2022/23 over 30 contracting monitoring visits have been completed with independent providers. Due to the lifting of Covid restrictions the number completed virtually has reduced significantly.

Workforce is a central issue impacting all provider types in 2022/23 and at the core of many quality concerns raised. As a result staffing is discussed at all provider visits, particularly in relation to agency use, recruitment, and skills/experience.

### SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES MONITORING 2021/22 (FRAMEWORK PROVIDERS)

RCT has increased the number of social workers returns year on year since 2020 which is excellent progress and are the Authority with the most improved level of return across Wales. The number of returns by RCT's young people remains stable between 50-60% of eligible placements, again a very positive response rate. The popularity of young people returning a Makaton survey has increased.

A summary of the results categorised by Wellbeing Outcome is illustrated overleaf for RCT. Feedback is consistently in the top centile from providers, social workers and crucially children and young people. For children and young people completing the Makaton survey education and social presentation score slightly lower on average, on further analysis of these results it's evident that a small number of surveys returned where the young people were on reduced timetables at school impacted the overall outcome area.



Below are a selection of the comments provided by young people, providers and social workers on independent placements active during 2022. Each quote relates to a different placement, and the majority are positive.

#### Young Person Comments

*"When I need support, my carer is always there for me with understanding and advice."*

*"I used to get angry all the time but now I don't, and I know how to be happy."*

*"I am going back to live with my mam, so my carer is helping me to do stuff better for when I go home. She says it will be good for mam too."*

*"I want to live at home, but I know for now I can't and this is the best place to be."*

*"I am always encouraged to feel proud of my achievements."*

### **Provider Comments**

*“L had missed a significant amount of education, made worse through Covid. The carers have worked hard to support him to reengage in school and catch up with extra homework. L is now achieving predicted grades and enjoys school.”*

*“Despite some concerns at the start of the placement about carers experience in meeting the needs, the carers have committed to increase their knowledge as a means of caring for T. T has settled in and has a great relationship with the carers, this is helping to reduce the risks from exploitation.”*

“

### **Social Worker Comments**

*“After a difficult start J now attends school regularly and seems to be thriving. J's attendance is very good and his behaviour in school is positive.”*

*“T's confidence has grown in the last few years; he is able to express his wishes to the carers with no involvement from myself. T has a great sense of self and where he wants to be, he also can verbalise positive attributes in himself.”*

*“This foster placement has had a positive impact on this YP and it is noted that the YP feels part of the family and has said that he cannot imagine living anywhere else, which is a strong indicator of how settled he feels with this carers. Foster carers have been extremely supportive of the YP and are strong advocates for him”.*

Overall satisfaction across the range of framework independent placements commissioned by RCT remains consistently high. Good response rates from all eligible participants, increases confidence in the reliability of the qualitative data.

## **YOUNG COMMISSIONERS IN RCT**

The Young Commissioners Group continues to go from strength to strength with 60+ members, including children and young people cared for by RCT, and living in RCT, participating in the regular events. This year they have been consulted on a number of national pieces of policy including the National Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young Adults. They are held in high regard by a range of organisations across Wales.

One young person from RCT is a leader of the Young Commissioners Voices Board, influencing their work programme and supporting her peers, she is in her 5<sup>th</sup> year as a regular member of the group.

C attended a 4Cs Board in 2022 to speak directly to Heads and Directors of Childrens Services across Wales. She is confident, articulate and is an excellent advocate for all children looked after. Most recently she sat on the Interview Panel for the 4Cs team's new Engagement, Participation and Consultation Officer.



Since our last report to the Corporate Parenting Board the 4Cs Team have been awarded the National Participation Standards Kitemark.

## CONCLUSION

4Cs continues to work to support RCT as a member of the national Consortium with its commissioning and contract monitoring of independent sector placements.

Outcomes for CLA in framework independent sector placements are being met 'most or all of the time'.

Children and young people across Wales and specifically in RCT are proactively involved in independent sector service design and monitoring of outcomes. Their voice is central to the work at 4Cs.

Where quality concerns are identified in framework or non-framework independent placements 4Cs and RCT colleagues work collaboratively with providers to resolve issues and plan for sustainable service improvement.

4Cs primary focus into 2023/24 is to support RCT with its placement commissioning strategy and its implementation of the new policy agenda under the Programme for Government.

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023

### PARTICIPATION UPDATE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

#### REPORT OF THE ITERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

**Author:** Nicole Katchi- Graduate Officer- Participation (Children's Services)

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update about RCT Children's Services engagement activities and the Participation Strategy for 2023. An implementation plan has been developed to take forward actions and key milestones as part of a Children and Young People Steering group. This is in development from January 2023. Young people will also be invited to give feedback about the Participation strategy and implementation plan going forward.
- 1.2 The Children's Services 'Get Involved' survey launched in early November 2022 and is currently open to engage further responses from care experienced children and young people. The survey asks children and young people about what is going well, what could be better and how they would like to get involved with participation activities and their preferred methods of communication (See appendix 1).
- 1.3 The survey will gather qualitative and quantitative responses from children and young people and this will be used to help inform the implementation plan going forward. Young people will receive feedback following the report as part of a 'You said, we did' mechanism.
- 1.4 The Christmas themed feedback event for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 has been rescheduled for the beginning of February 2022 with Voices from Care Cymru due to staff sickness with Covid (See appendix:2).

- 1.5 Voices from Care Cymru have been working alongside the Graduate Officer for Participation to develop nature-based activities and well-being initiatives for care experienced young people during October half term (See appendix:3 and 5).
- 1.6 The Transform Team in Children's Services have worked with young people in Residential and Foster care to develop videos about why staying local matters to young people in RCT. This will be shown to the Deputy Minister for Social Services on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023.
- 1.7 The care experienced summit was on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December and we are awaiting responses from Welsh Government.
- 1.8 Discuss how Corporate Parenting Board members could join a Task and Finish group with young people supported by VFCC to decide how young people will be involved in the Corporate Parenting Board as equal partners with members rather than as contributors.
- 1.9 The Reviewing Team have sought views from young people open to the 16+ teams about their experiences of review meetings as well as asking for their views about the 'My Voice, My Review' consultation document. The Reviewing Team also provide an update about the Children Looked After website advancements.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

## **3. BACKGROUND/ PROGRESS TO DATE**

- 3.1 The Participation Strategy for 2023 has been developed and will be shared with Children's Services staff in January 2023. The strategy outlines guidance for children, young people and families for consultation, participation, and co-production.
- 3.2 An implementation plan has been written to take forward key action and milestones for participation. A children and young people steering group will be appointed in January 2023 to take forward these actions.

- 3.3 The Christmas feedback event (following the 1<sup>st</sup> September event) was scheduled for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 but this has been rescheduled for early February due to staff sickness with Covid (See appendix:2).
- 3.4 The 'Get Involved' survey for Children Looked After (ages 4 to 17) and Care leavers (ages 18 to 24) was launched in November 2022. The survey infographic with QR code and parent/carer letter has been sent to 863 addresses. We've had 61 responses (9.1.2023) and that is just over a 7% response rate and hope to receive further responses in January 2023. The closing date will be Mid-February 2023 (See appendix:1).
- 3.5 The Sky's the Limit Launch ( for ages 8- to 13-year-olds) received positive feedback from the 9 young people that attended the nature-based activities in Pontypridd (See appendix:3).
- 3.6 Voices from Care Cymru have been working with the Graduate Officer for Participation (Children's Services) to develop well-being initiatives that include a resilient based workshop for 8- to 13-year-olds for the Sky's the Limit Group and the 14–22-year-olds 'Local RCT Group'. This relates to feedback that young people asked for from the 1<sup>st</sup> September event that included well-being initiatives, experiences with nature and theatre events. 13 young people attended this event ( See appendix:4).
- 3.7 Voices from Care Cymru secured tickets for a theatre production of 'Snow White' in Cardiff and 30 tickets were allocated to care experienced young people and their carers in attendance for Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The Participation strategy for 2023 will be shared with Children's Services staff and a Children and Young People Steering group will be developed.
- 4.2 The implementation plan will be discussed with the Children and Young People steering group and young people about how to take it forward.
- 4.3 The 'Get Involved' survey asks children and young people about what is going well, what could be better and how they would like to get involved with engagement activities and their preferred methods of communication. The survey results will help to inform participation work going forward and Voices from Care Cymru can be informed of this data for their next steps with Children's Services.

- 4.4 In December 2022 a small number of RCT care experienced young people contributed to a summit where you people made recommendations about change to Government Ministers including the First Minister. This work will culminate in a Declaration by Welsh Government as part of the Radical reform of services, it is aimed at ensuring rights are observed, and services across Wales work to remove barriers to improving outcomes for Care experienced young people.
- 4.5 Developing a Task and Finish Group with Corporate Parenting Board members and young people (supported by VFCC) is important for accountability to young people.
- 4.6 The Reviewing Team have approached the 16+ Teams, and partners in Health and Education to update the information relating to their service areas to ensure that the information continues to be relevant and up to date. In ensuring we capture the voice of the child and their lived experience; they are updating the My Review documents to make them more appealing and interactive. The Reviewing Team are developing a 'My Review' in consultation with colleagues in the Disabled Children's Team which will use 'widgets or 'emoji's' style infographics to assist disabled young children in sharing their voice and experiences.
- 4.7 The Reviewing Team recommend a pilot phase to review and analyse feedback from children and young people to ensure that the final 'My Review' document is co-produced, has appropriate content to suit their needs, isn't time consuming whereby it deters them completing it and is accessible in a range of formats.
- 4.8 The Reviewing Team have made the '2 Sides' website content link to the YEPS website. This includes 'My Health,' 'Leaving Care,' 'My Education,' 'Getting your Voice Heard,' 'Your Rights,' 'RCT Forum,' 'My Review' and 'What does Looked after mean?'
- 4.9 In February 2023, the Reviewing Team will consult with children and young people who have used the 'My Voice, My Review' to gain young people's experiences and ideas to improve the design and content of the 2 sides website.



## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 5.1 This is an information report. The implementation plan will be discussed with the Children and Young People Steering group and young people going forward.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the future implementation process.

## **6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 6.1 This is an information report.
- 6.2 Further consultation will however be undertaken as part of the work of the participation strategy.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 The legal requirements for children and young people are set down within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

## **9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 9.1 This links to the Children's Services Delivery plan 2022-2023 that, 'Children's voices are Heard: To improve engagement with children and young people, to ensure co-production and that the voice of the child is heard in service development and delivery.'
- 9.2 It also contributes to 'The Children's Commissioner for Wales' that champion the development of a Children's Rights Approach grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

## **10. NEXT STEPS**

- 10.1 The feedback event that was arranged for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December has been re-scheduled for early February and the young people from the

original event on 1<sup>st</sup> September will be invited for feedback about increasing CLA based awareness training for teachers.

- 10.2 The Participation Strategy will be shared with Children's Services staff going forward in January 2023.
- 10.3 The implementation plan will be discussed with a Children and Young People Steering group to take forward in January with key areas and milestones.
- 10.4 Developing strategies to increase the response rate for the 'Get Involved' care experienced survey.
- 10.5 An accessible digital platform for children and young people to keep up to date with participation events and the outcomes of these events.
- 10.6 The Reviewing Team will be consulting with care experienced children and young people about the 'My Voice, My Review' and the 2 sides website in February 2023.

## Appendix

1. 'Get Involved' survey, Parent/Carer Letter and live link



51809-13 Childrens Services Get involved  
'Get involved' Survey letter Cymraeg and Er

Live survey link:

<https://RCTCBC.welcomesyourfeedback.net/lohju>

2. Christmas feedback Participation event (this will be rescheduled late early February due to staff sickness)



Participation event poster 19.12.22- CYM  
Participation event poster 19.12.22 Englis

3. Voices from Care Cymru- 'Nature workshop' on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022



'Sky's the Limit  
Nature event with Voi

4. Voices from Care Cymru- 'Building Strengths' workshop feedback from young people on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022



Building Strengths  
photos workshop.ppt

5. Voices from Care Cymru January 2023 report



Corporate  
Parenting Board RC

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**  
**AS AMENDED BY**  
**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**  
**DATE: 26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023**

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES, IN  
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER,  
COUNCILLOR G CAPLE**

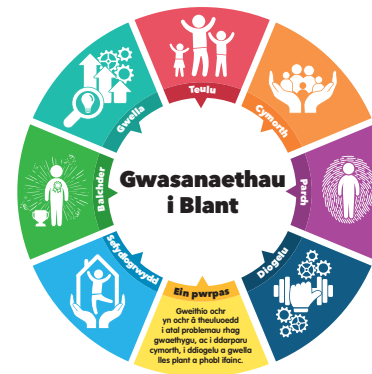
**Officer to contact:** Nicole Katchi

# Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydwn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydwn ni'n amddiffyn.

## RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.



Arolwg **'Cymera ran'** ar gyfer pob plentyn a pherson ifanc sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal.

Dyweda wrthon ni:

- Beth sy'n mynd yn dda?
- Beth all fod yn well ar gyfer pob plentyn a pherson ifanc sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal?
- Sut hoffech chi fod yn rhan o bethau gyda'r Gwasanaethau i Blant?

**'Get involved'** survey for all care experienced Children and Young People (4 to 24 years old)

Tell us:

- What is going well?
- What could be better for all care experienced children and young people?
- How would you like to get involved with Children's Services?

Clicia ar y Còd QR i gwblhau'r arolwg.



Scan the QR code to complete the survey.



Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg  
You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh



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Dear Parent/Carer,

### **‘Get involved’ survey for care experienced children and young people aged 4-24 years old**

Rhondda Cynon Taf Children’s Services are working to increase the voice of care experienced children and young people to have a say and share their experiences by identifying and promoting practices that have a positive influence on them.

We would like care experienced children and young people aged 4 to 24 to take part in the ‘**Get involved**’ survey to find out the following.

1. What is positive (going well) for children and young people?
2. What could be improved (made better) for children and young people?
3. Would children and young people like to get involved in activities?
4. How would children and young people like Children’s Services to communicate with them?

We will use the anonymous answers from all children looked after completing the survey to improve the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people in RCT.

#### **What will you do with any information shared in the survey?**

- Completed surveys will be held by Children’s Services and stored securely.
- The answers from all children looked after will be used to produce a report. No names will be used in the report.
- A children and young people’s version of the report will be sent to all children looked after whether they completed the survey or not.

***We would like carers to encourage their children and young people to complete the survey to share their views about their experiences of being in care. The information gathered will help to improve the work we do to support the children and young people that we look after.***

Yours sincerely,

Annabel Lloyd

Cyfarwyddwr y Gwasanaethau i Blant / Service Director Children's Services

Y Pafiliynau, Parc y Cambrian, Cwm Clydach, Tonypany, CF40 2XX  
The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX

Ffôn/Tel: 01443 424140

**Paul Mee**

Cyfarwyddwr Cyfran y Gwasanaethau Cymuned a Gwasanaethau i Blant | Group Director, Community and Children’s Services

#### **Dewiswch iaith a diwyg eich dogfen | Available in alternative formats and languages**

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi. Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Gymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.  
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay. Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.



**MAE EICH DATA O BWYS** [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/diogeludata](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/diogeludata)  
**YOUR DATA MATTERS** [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection)



Annwyl Riant/Warcheidwad,

### **Arolwg 'Dod yn rhan o bethau' i blant a phobl ifainc rhwng 4 a 24 oed sydd â phrofiad o dderbyn gofal**

Mae Gwasanaethau i Blant Rhondda Cynon Taf yn gweithio i helpu i farn plant a phobl ifainc sydd â phrofiad o dderbyn gofal gael ei chlywed. Rydyn ni eisiau iddyn nhw ddweud eu dweud a rhannu eu profiadau drwy nodi ac annog arferion sy'n cael dylanwad cadarnhaol arnyn nhw.

Hoffen ni i blant a phobl ifainc rhwng 4 a 24 oed sydd â phrofiad o dderbyn gofal gymryd rhan yn yr arolwg **'Dod yn rhan o bethau'** er mwyn i ni gael gwybod y canlynol:

1. Beth sy'n mynd yn dda i blant a phobl ifainc?
2. Beth allen ni ei wella i blant a phobl ifainc?
3. Hoffai'r plant a'r bobl ifainc gymryd rhan mewn gweithgareddau?
4. Sut hoffai plant a phobl ifainc i'r Gwasanaethau i Blant gysylltu â nhw?

Byddwn ni'n defnyddio'r atebion dienw gan y plant sy'n derbyn gofal sydd wedi llenwi'r arolwg i wella lles plant a phobl ifainc sydd â phrofiad o dderbyn gofal yn RhCT.

### **Beth fyddwch chi'n ei wneud gyda'r wybodaeth sydd wedi'i rhannu yn yr arolwg?**

- Bydd yr arolygon sydd wedi'u cwblhau yn cael eu cadw a'u storio yn ddiogel gan y Gwasanaethau i Blant
- Bydd yr atebion gan y plant sy'n derbyn gofal yn cael eu defnyddio i lunio adroddiad. Fyddwn ni ddim yn defnyddio unrhyw enwau yn yr arolwg
- Bydd fersiwn o'r adroddiad a fydd yn addas ar gyfer plant a phobl ifainc yn cael ei anfon i'r holl blant sy'n derbyn gofal, p'un a wnaethon nhw lenwi'r arolwg ai peidio

***Hoffen ni i warcheidwaid annog eu plant a phobl ifainc i lenwi'r arolwg er mwyn iddyn nhw rannu eu barn am eu profiadau o dderbyn gofal. Bydd yr wybodaeth rydyn ni'n ei chasglu yn ein helpu ni i wella'r gwaith rydyn ni'n ei wneud i gefnogi'r plant a phobl ifainc rydyn ni'n eu gofalu amdany'n nhw.***

Yn gywir,

Annabel Lloyd

Cyfarwyddwr y Gwasanaethau i Blant / Service Director Children's Services

Y Pafiliynau, Parc y Cambrian, Cwm Clydach, Tonypany, CF40 2XX  
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**YOUR DATA MATTERS** [www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection)







## Amdana i

Fy enw i yw Nicole Katchi

Swyddog Cyfranogiad

(Gwasanaethau i Blant) RhCT

E-bost: [nicole.katchi@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:nicole.katchi@rctcbc.gov.uk)



Rydyn ni am roi adborth i chi ar ôl mynychu  
achlysur ar 1 Medi 2022.

Anfonwch e-bost at Nicole er mwyn cofrestru  
ar gyfer yr achlysur erbyn 5 Rhagfyr 2022

**Achlysur: Dydd Llun 19 Rhagfyr 2022**

Amgueddfa Pontypridd, Stryd y Bont,  
Pontypridd, CF37 4PE

**3.45pm hyd at 5.45pm**

Dewch draw am  
'weithgareddau crefft  
Nadolig' hwyl ac i  
dderbyn taleb  
'One4all' a phoster.



Bydd lluniaeth ysgafn ar gael ar y diwrnod. E-bostiwch i roi gwybod i mi am  
unrhyw alergeddau neu anghenion dietegol erbyn 5 Rhagfyr 2022

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We want to give you feedback after attending the participation event on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

Come along for some fun 'Christmas craft activities' and receive a 'One4all' voucher and a poster.



## All about me

My name is Nicole Katchi  
Participation Officer  
(Children's Services) RCT



Email: [nicole.katchi@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:nicole.katchi@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Please email Nicole to register for the event by 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**Event: Monday 19th December 2022**

Pontypridd Museum, Bridge Street,  
Pontypridd, CF37 4PE

**3:45pm to 5:45pm**

Light snacks will be provided for on the day. Let me know of any allergies or dietary requirements via email by 5th December 2022

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## Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

### RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

- 9 young people attended the 'Sky's the Limit' Nature workshop for 8 to 13 year olds on Saturday 22/10/22.
- Paint and press on to tote bags, sewing ( Hannah from Growing Space-supported with the paint and press and the sewing).
- The young people also did pumpkin carving, games and a nature walk.
- Some direct and email feedback included:

*'I've never done sewing before and I really enjoyed the arts and crafts. I didn't realise I was good at sewing. I would definitely like to come again'* (aged 11).

*'Just wanted to say thank you for the event today, the children had lots of fun and kept saying how lovely it was, also both are interested in build your strength and Halloween party. If you have more info with dates and where would be great'* (Foster carer via email).



# Feedback

Black Paper cards  
Placks

"Nothing to make better  
it's all good"

Good Food  
extra Food

good

more Park time

enjoyed Bags

Sale/Raise Money

Pumpkin

ice cream

Pumpkins good

Balloons

would do again

OK

ice cream  
Fries

more recre.

idea  
can I  
come  
again!

Defo  
coming  
again

Nothing  
Bad

- "Nothing to make better, all good"
- "Good food"
- "Defo coming again"
- "Can I come again?"
- "Pumpkins good, would do again"
- "Sale, raise money"- ( Get involved to sell crafts to raise money)
- "Nothing bad"

# Pictures from the Art with Nature activities- Paint, press, sewing and carving pumpkins





Page 56





## Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

## RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

# Update from the recent 'Building Strengths' workshop – Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022

13 young people attended the two sessions.

8-13 years old= 10 young people

14-22 years old= 3 young people



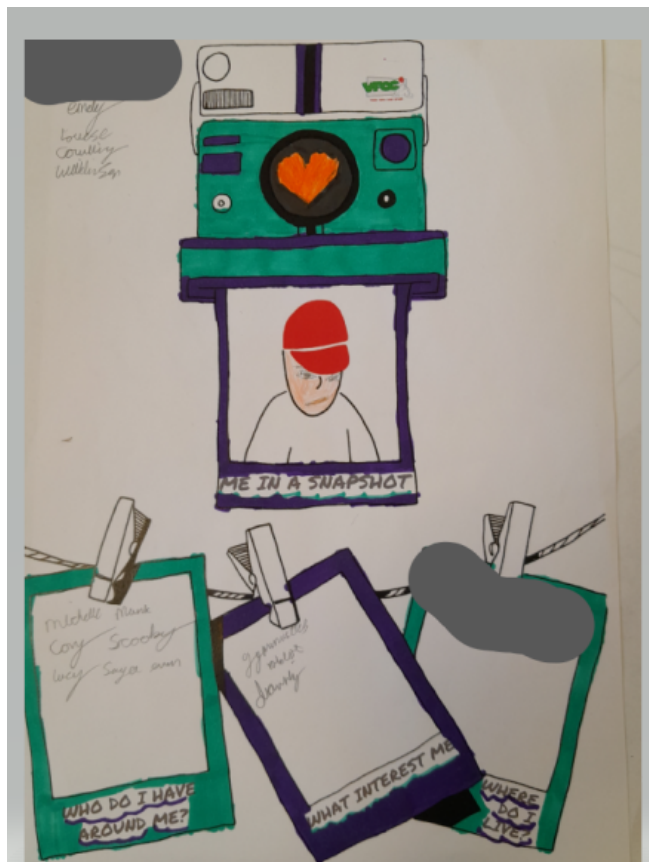
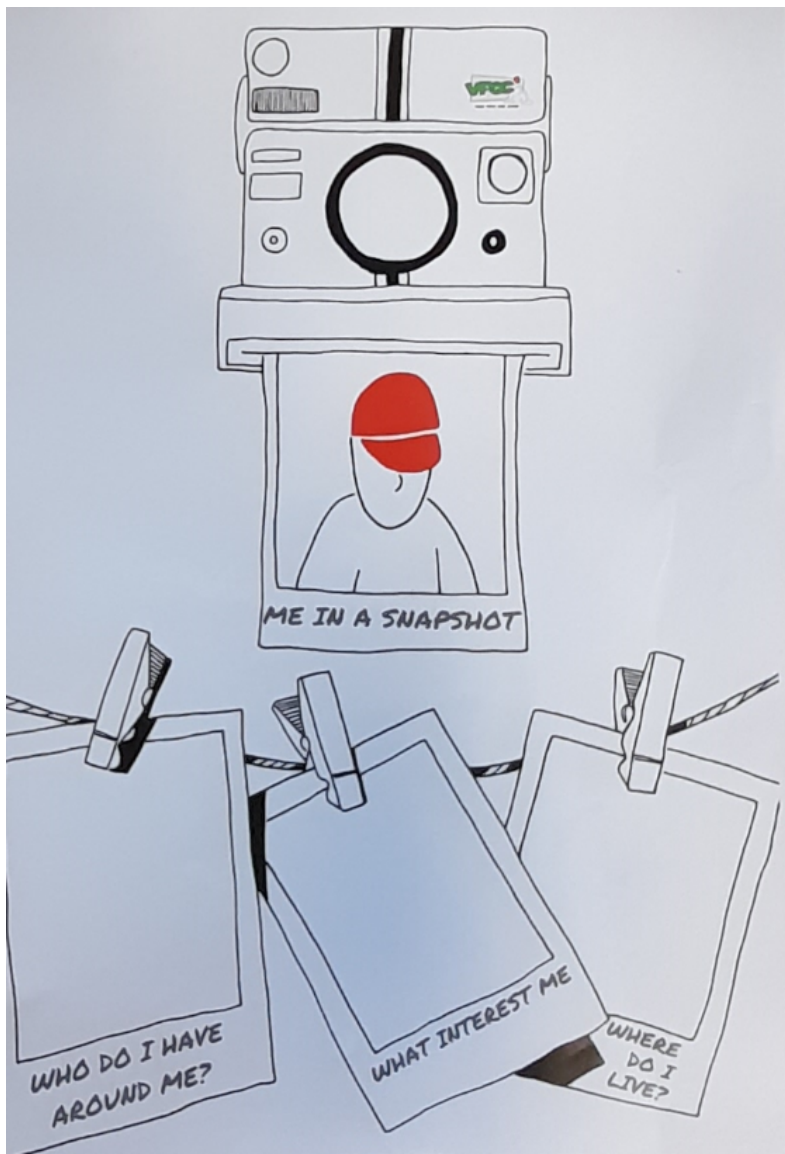
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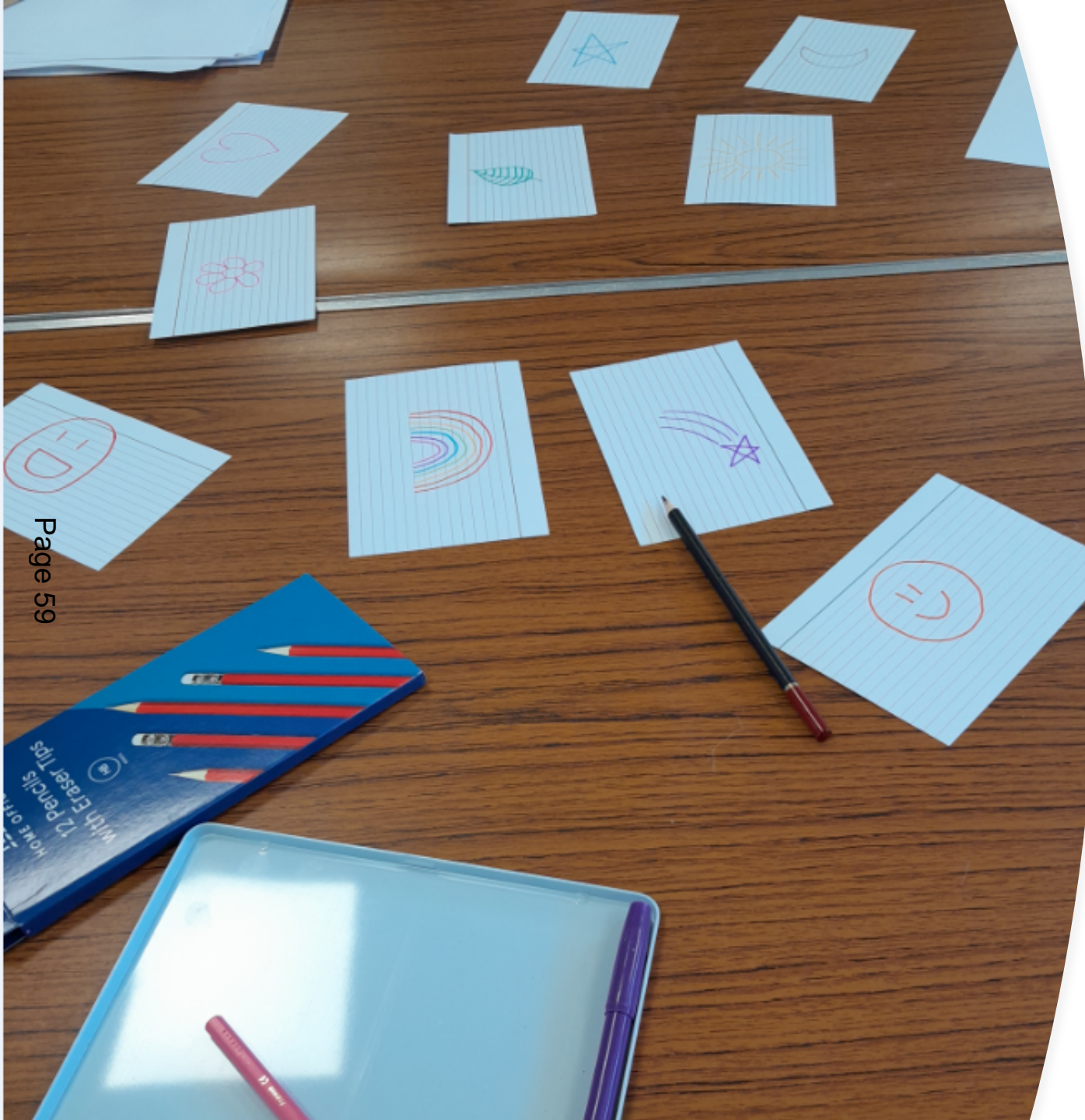
Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

## RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

- Ice breaker activities including games.
- 'Me in a snapshot profile.'
- Likes and interests.





- 
- Young people picked strength-based questions and could ask questions to other young people to find out more about their strengths and any positive qualities that they shared.

## Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

## RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

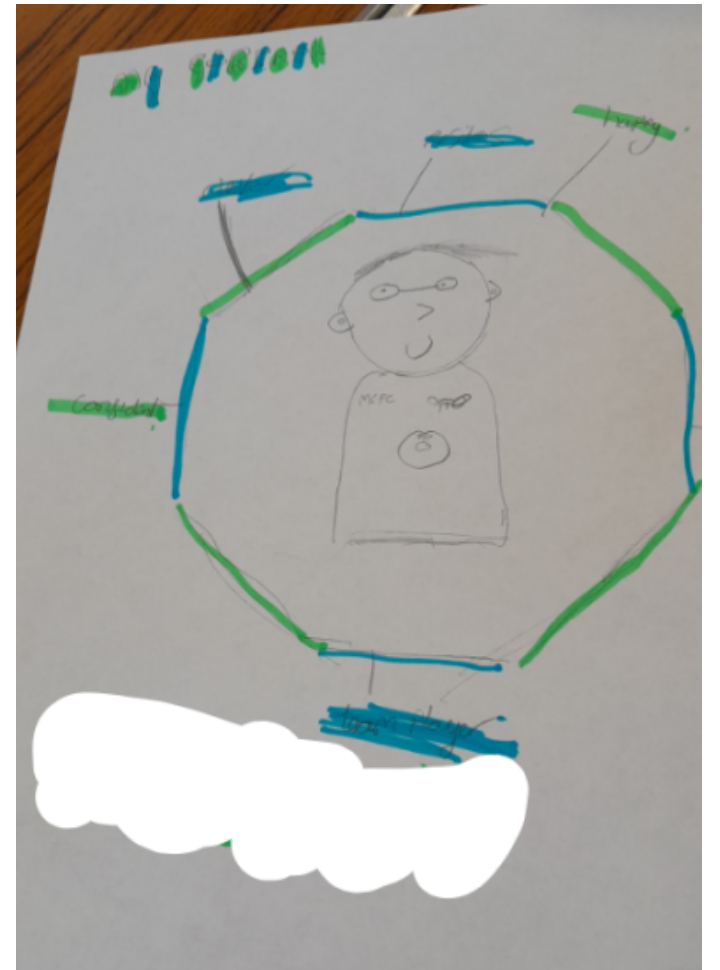
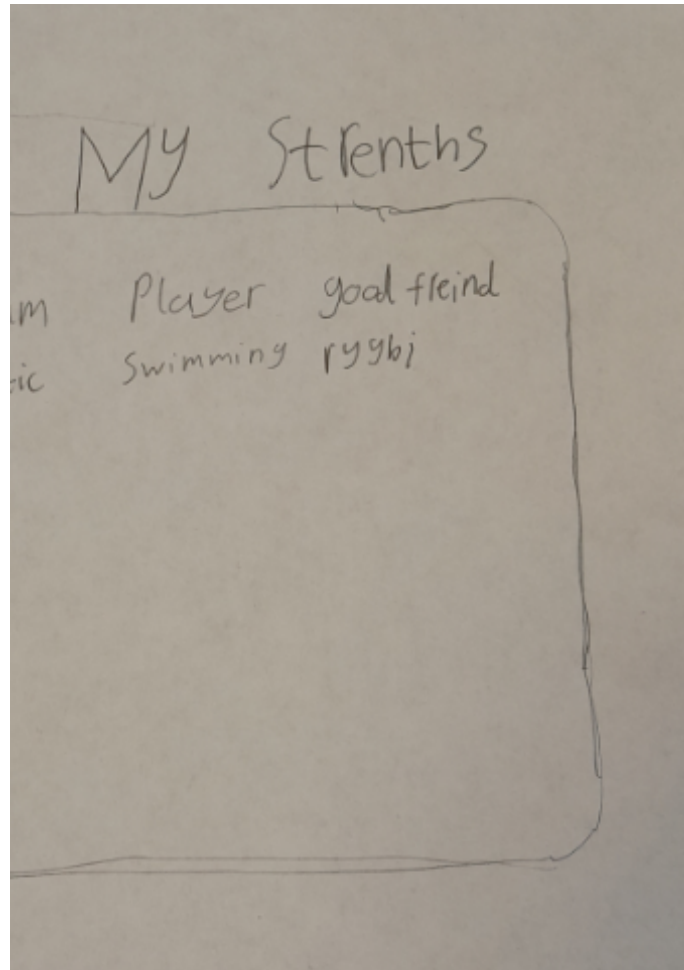


This young person mentioned their strengths:

- Strong
- Confident
- Creative
- Resilient
- Team player
- Good at football
- Sportsmanship
- Intelligent

Each young person then discussed their strengths and how these strengths are useful to support others.

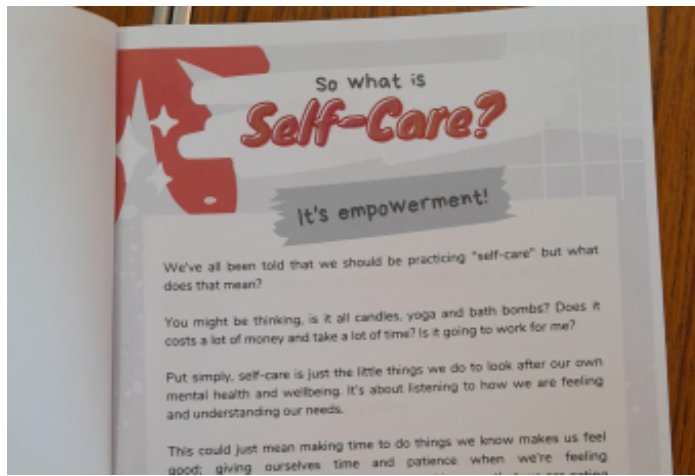
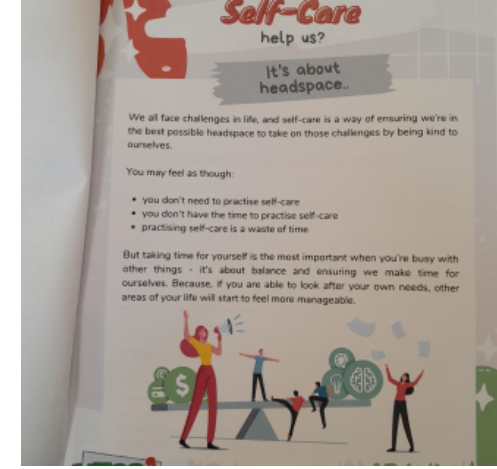
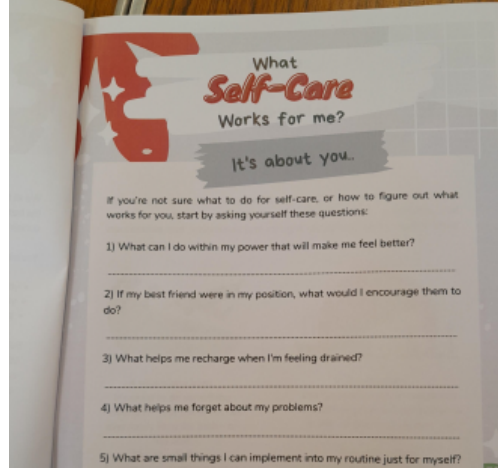


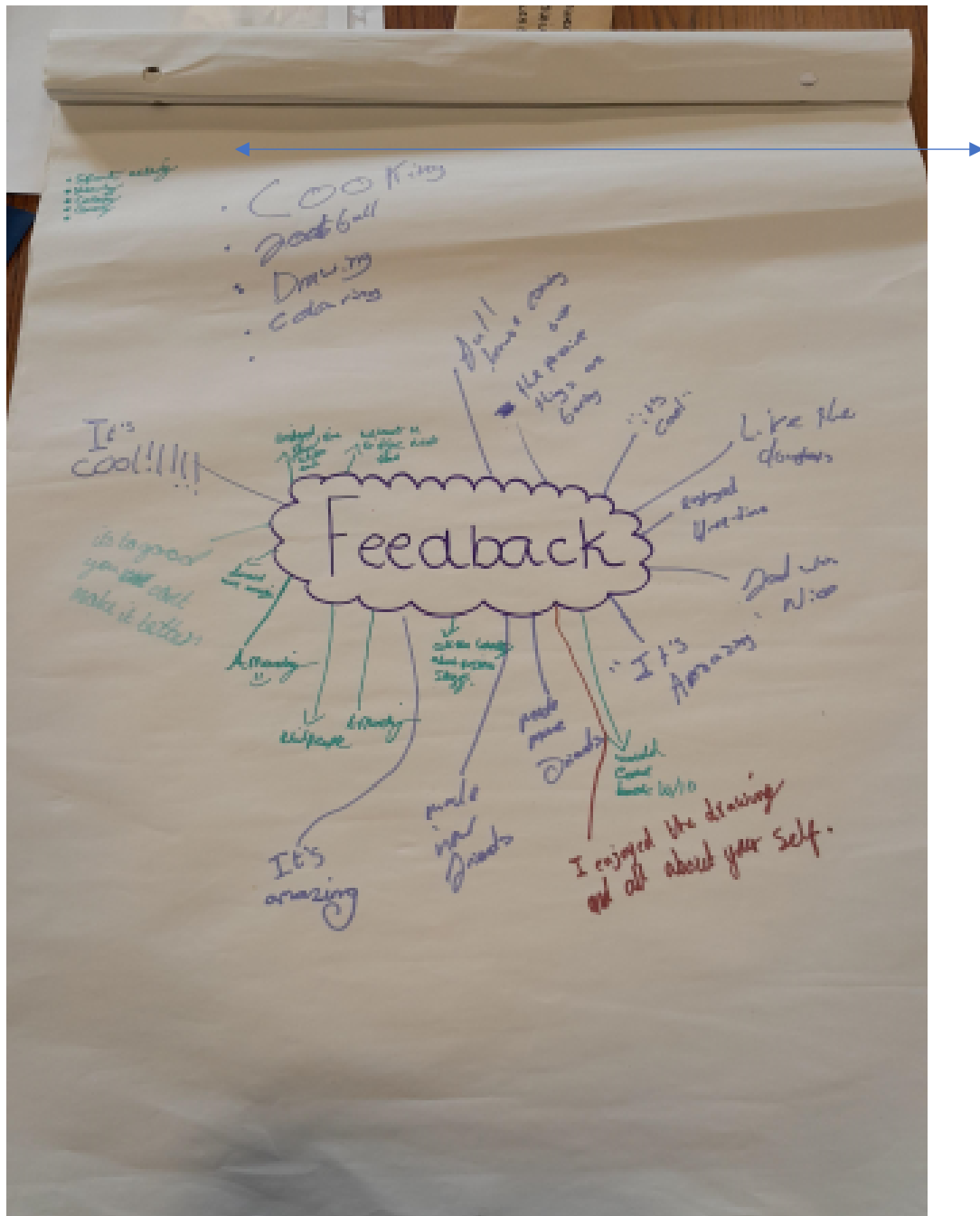




Goal based jars: 1. Reminder of our personal strengths, 2. What we look forward to. 3. How we can achieve our goals.

# Voices: Well-being booklet of activities- 14-22 years old





Young People have asked for the following at future events:

- Cooking skills
- Sports activities- Dodgeball.
- Nature activities
- Drawing/Art activities

Feedback from the 8-13 year olds includes:

#### Positive

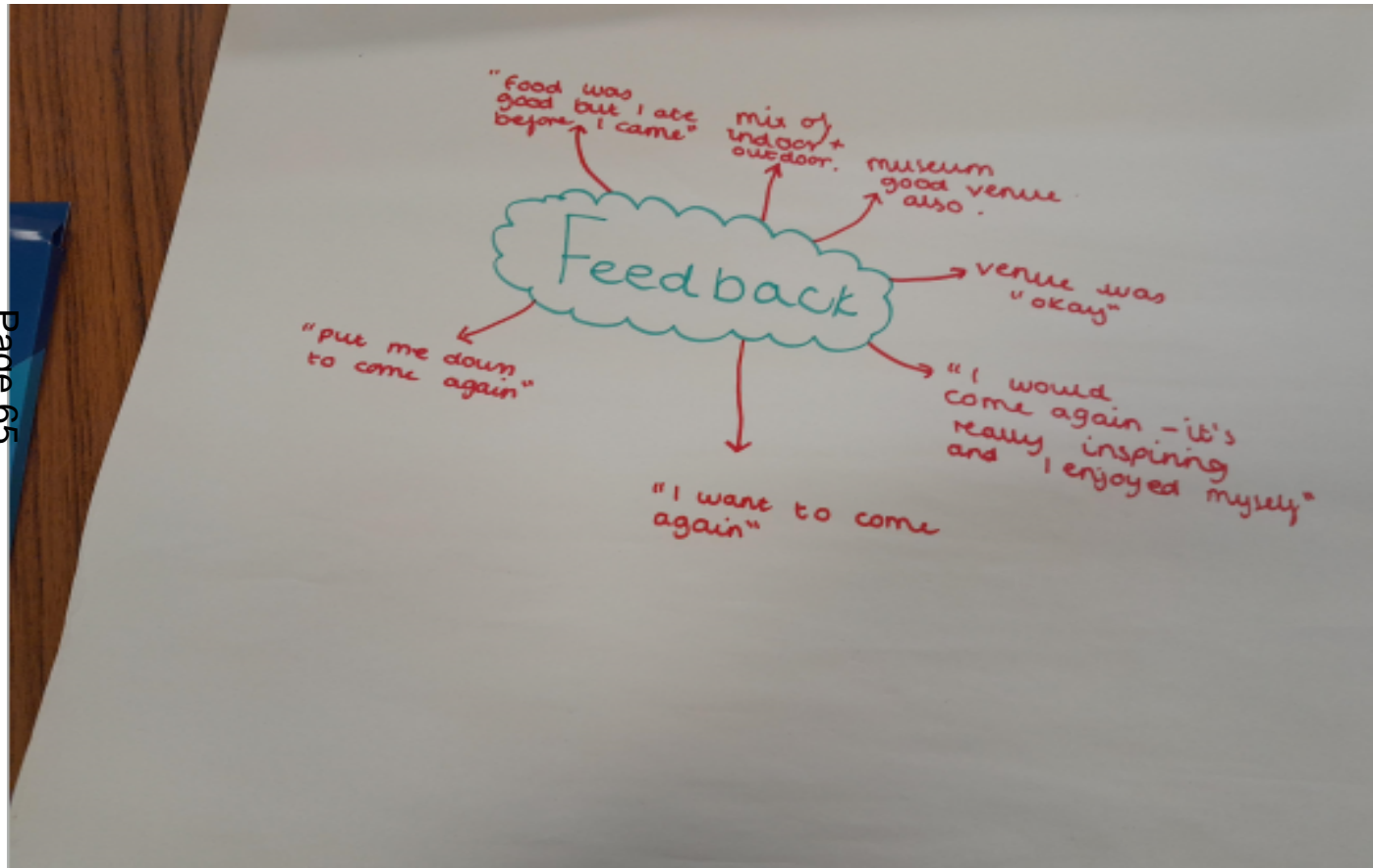
- 'I have met 6 new friends today'
- 'It's too good, you can't make it better'
- 'Amazing'
- 'Make new friends'
- 'Food was nice' 'Liked the doughnuts'
- 'I enjoyed the drawing and all about yourself'
- 'Enjoyed free time'
- 'Kind people'
- 'It's cool'
- 'Would come back 10/10'

#### What could be better?

- 'The positive things are boring'



# Feedback from 14-22 year olds



## Feedback for future participation includes:

- 'Mix of indoor and outdoor.'
- 'I would come again, it's really inspiring and I really enjoyed myself'
- 'I want to come again'
- 'Put me down to come again'
- 'Venue was ok'
- 'Museum good venue also'

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## **RCT Corporate Parenting Summary Report**

**Name of Organisation:** Voices From Care Cymru

**Name of Project:** RCT Local Group

**Funder:** RCT Local Authority

**Team Member:** Laura Harper

**Date:** 5th January 2023

### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is:

- To demonstrate the work that Voices From Care Cymru (VFCC) is undertaking to support care-experienced young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT);
- To assure that the voice of care-experienced children and young people in RCT are at the core of work surrounding policy changes, service development, and delivery;
- To highlight the range of resources made available by VFCC to consult and engage with care-experienced children and young people in RCT.

### **2. PROJECT SUMMARY**

#### **Connecting with Care-Experienced Young People:**

This section will provide a brief summary of work conducted with the Local Groups between October 2022 and January 2023. Full details of these sessions can be seen in the section titled 'Engagement'.

Following the new model of work in agreement with RCT Local Authority, one of the main areas of work since the last quarter has been conducting outreach activities and detached opportunities to engage with the care community. The main themes of these engaging sessions were the Summit and Christmas. As mentioned in the last Corporate Parenting Report, VFCC is also working to a three-tiered approach to deliver the Local Groups and widen participation. Firstly, there has been consultation work arranged and delivered on a variety of topics such as Building Strengths and the Young Person's Guarantee. Secondly, there

has been targeted social change work in the form of the Summit. Thirdly, there have been feedback opportunities given at events to inform peer representative views of the group sessions.

RCT Local Group project has engaged with 18 care-experienced young people in the RCT area from October 2022 to January 2023. Of these young people that engaged in the sessions, 13 were under the age of 18, 3 were aged between 14 and 22, and 2 were over the age of 22. There was a mix of young people attending internally (through Voices membership) and externally (through public social media and Nicole Katchi, Graduate Officer for Participation).

### **Engagement:**

Please see the following for a full range of our activities delivered through the Local Group project.

- 26th October 2022: 1-to-1 session with a group member to promote socialisation and reflect on group work and discuss opportunities for the next few months.
- 4th November 2022: Building Strengths Workshop with a variety of activities to encourage positivity, self care and empowerment. This session was run twice back to back, once with ages 8-14 where there were 10 attendees from RCT, and once with ages 14-22 where there were 3 attendees from RCT.
- 10th November 2022: The Local Groups were invited to a National Conversation in the VFCC office regarding the Young Person's Guarantee with Vaughan Gethin, MS. 2 members from RCT attended this event.
- 9th December 2022: VFCC received 20 tickets to the Cardiff Christmas pantomime 'Snow White'. Tickets were promoted to RCT members internally and externally. 9 members from RCT attended this occasion - 6 Sky's the Limit and 3 Local Group members.
- 16th December 2022 - CANCELLED: The Local Group members party was scheduled for this date initially, with a party planned in Cardiff for Local Group members from all 3 authorities to attend. Unfortunately, due to train strikes, this event had to be cancelled the week prior.
- 16th December 2022: The RCT Local Group members were invited to a Christmas film catch up to boost well-being and encourage participation. 1 member from RCT attended on this occasion.
- 19th December 2022 - POSTPONED: The Feedback Event for Participation was scheduled on this date with Nicole Katchi. The plan for the event was to

invite the young people that attended the initial information gathering event back to give their feedback. Unfortunately, due to illness, this event was postponed and is being rearranged in the coming months.

- 20th December 2022: An online Christmas quiz was organised for Local Group members. The purpose of this event was to engage young people that wanted to do a quiz, but also to provide an online alternative for anybody that had been unable to attend Christmas activities due to illness or working. 1 Local Group member from RCT attended on this occasion.
- 22nd December 2022: A Christmas crafts session was run for young people to attend as an alternative to the Christmas party. There was music, food, gift bags and arts and crafts activities for Local Group members to engage with. 1 member of the RCT Local Group attended on this occasion.

Engagement in these events has been encouraged through the promotion of internal and public social media pages, with individual posters or posts uploaded for almost every event for members and partners to see. A group chat for VFCC members in RCT eligible for the Local Group has been created, and all opportunities are posted there, also. Any members from RCT outside the Local Group have had these events shared individually.

There were also a variety of activities available over the last quarter that young people from the Local Group were invited to attend. These were not specifically run by the Participation team within VFCC, but they were open to all members to attend.

These were:



## Event Feedback:

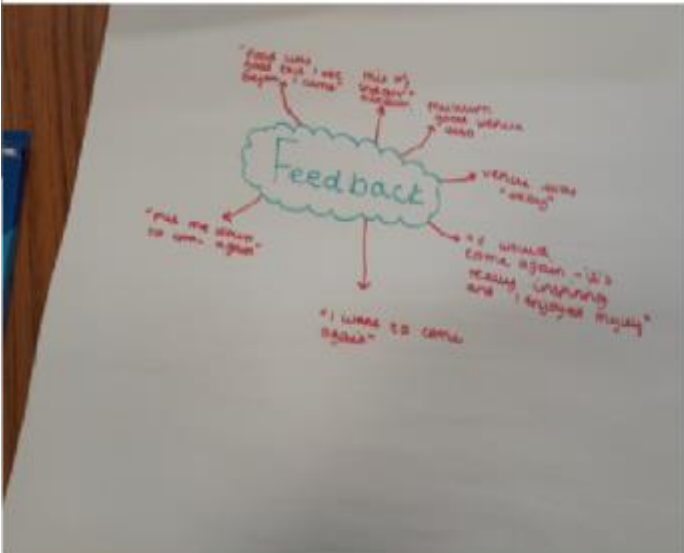
Event feedback has been very important to us at VFCC when conducting events across the board, but specifically in Local Groups. Most feedback has been verbal which would be difficult to transcribe for the purpose of the report. Recurring feedback points include the following:

- Young people enjoy a variety of activities;
- Young people are flexible on location;
- Young people needed locations of groups to be close to public transport;
- Young people were open to online sessions on occasion.

However, notable written feedback was given on the Building Strengths Workshop which is as follows:

(Slides taken from Nicole Katchi's reflective powerpoint on the session)

### Feedback from 14-22 year olds



**Feedback for future participation includes:**

- 'Mix of indoor and outdoor.'
- 'I would come again, it's really inspiring and I really enjoyed myself'
- 'I want to come again'
- 'Put me down to come again'
- 'Venue was ok'
- 'Museum good venue also'



Young People have asked for the following at future events:

- Cooking skills
- Sports activities- Dodgeball.
- Nature activities
- Drawing/Art activities

Feedback from the 8-13 year olds includes:

**Positive**

- 'I have met 6 new friends today'
- 'It's too good, you can't make it better'
- 'Amazing'
- 'Make new friends'
- 'Food was nice' 'Liked the doughnuts'
- 'I enjoyed the drawing and all about yourself'
- 'Enjoyed free time'
- 'Kind people'
- 'It's cool'
- 'Would come back 10/10'

**What could be better?**

- 'The positive things are boring'

In the RCT Local Groups, we have found the written feedback so important for reflection and promotion of voice and control for members. As such, the Local Group will be implementing written feedback more regularly moving forward. This will largely replace standard verbal feedback. As will be mentioned in the 'What's Next?' portion of this report, focussing on reflective feedback is a theme that will be looked at with the group in the near future.

**RCT Questionnaire:**

The VFCC RCT Local Group has continued to work closely with Nicole Katchi at RCT to participate in the questionnaire for care-experienced children and young people in the region. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get feedback about children's services, and will help shape consultation work for the Local Group moving forward. 5 care-experienced young people from the group helped develop the questionnaire. The final version was launched to Local Group members via the group chat, and feedback from the young people was that most of them had completed it.

The results of the questionnaire will help shape the Local Group work moving forward, identifying key issues and themes that arise. The questionnaire will also help support the direction of the group, outlining where there may be a need for VFCC to focus their consultation work (i.e: housing, education, healthcare, etc).

### **Care-Experienced Summit:**

On December 3rd and 4th 2022, VFCC ran a national Summit for care-experienced young people. In preparation for the event, each local authority in Wales, including RCT, was invited to put forward young people for a Young Ambassador role. The Young Ambassadors attended a plethora of meetings in advance of the Summit to share their views and updates on their chosen topic (education, mental health and wellbeing, health and social care, and social justice) to help shape a declaration for Ministers to sign. Over 40 young people across Wales represented their authority as Young Ambassadors, including representation for RCT.

On the day of the Summit, 40+ Young Ambassadors met with Welsh Ministers to share their ideas and discuss outcomes for children in care moving forward. The Welsh Ministers in attendance were: Mark Drakeford, Jane Hutt, Jeremy Miles, Lynne Neagle and Julie Morgan.

This event is not stand-alone, there will be a follow up event in 2023 where further plans and ideas will be discussed.



### **3. WHAT'S NEXT?**

We recognise that the Local Group must be representative of the whole care community in RCT to provide a holistic delivery. As such, it will be important that in the coming months all events are promoted internally as well as externally.

The planned events for the RCT Local Group for the next quarter (January - March) are as follows:



- Friday 27th January 2023. Theme = advocacy;
- Friday 24th February 2023. Theme = love. Self love/healthy relationships;
- Friday 24th March 2023. Theme = feedback + moving forward.

There will also be wider events during the coming months led by various teams. Notable examples include Care Day 2023, the Peer Support Groups, and the brand new Wellbeing Workshops and Homework Clubs. Again, information regarding these events will be distributed both internally to members and externally to service leads.

Furthermore, Laura Harper will work to create and continue strong links with relevant partner organisations and service leads. This includes, but is not limited to, TGP Cymru and the RCT Children's Services Teams.

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023

### CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

#### REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

**Author: Lyndon Lewis, Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service**  
**Tel: 01443 827300 / 01685 724960**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2022/23. This includes an update on current service delivery following the restructure of the service in August 2021, to outline some of the current priorities and to inform members of future service priorities, challenges/risks.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the changes made within the YOS, and the direction and challenges that lie ahead as a result of service changes following restructure and strategic change in relation to YOS performance measures.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress and improvements made and how this contributes to better outcomes for children and families.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and provides services across two local authority areas, namely Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. The local authority YOS areas merged to form Cwm Taf YOS in August 2014. The aim of the service is to prevent offending and re-offending of children and young adults who are either referred into the service or become subject to statutory interventions by the Law

Courts. The statutory partners to the service are: South Wales Police; Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board; HM Prison and Probation Service; and the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. These partners provide financial and staffing contributions to the Youth Offending Service and external grant funding is provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Welsh Government (WG) and the Police and Crime Commissioner's office (PCC).

- 3.2 Overall governance is facilitated by the Regional Cwm Taf Offender Management Board (OMB) which meets quarterly to hold the service to account, examine performance, and to monitor the delivery of the service.
- 3.3 In addition to the scrutiny provided via the Offender Management Board, the Youth Offending Service also reports its performance on a quarterly basis to the Youth Justice Board, and to the Welsh Government in relation to its prevention work. The YOS is also subject to an inspection regime carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).
- 3.4 The YOS is required to provide an annual and comprehensive Youth Justice Plan for the YJB, some of the content of which is summarised and reported upon within this report.

#### **4.0 WHERE WE WERE**

- 4.1 Alongside our partners, for much of 2020/21, many YOS staff undertook their day to day tasks remotely, meaning reduced face to face contact with children, families and victims whilst adjusting to working in a more agile way from home. This period also delayed the restructure of the YOS, implemented finally in August 2021 to meet new demands upon the service, and as such, the YOS now has two area based intervention teams operating across the Cwm Taf region. Prevention activity within YOS is now increasingly involved in the management of more complex cases, and subsequently the restructure ensured that Prevention work included increased management capacity as well as additional social work and senior practitioner oversight to ensure children and families received the right support at the right time.

#### **5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW**

- 5.1 This year, Cwm Taf YOS has been proactive in developing a 'child first' approach which treats children as children and seeks to ensure that they are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerability or the challenges they face. Despite the reduction in the numbers of children who enter into the criminal justice system, the service is currently dealing with larger numbers who are on the cusp of the system and who present with varied and complex needs. This situation has been exacerbated by the negative impact of the Covid 19 pandemic which includes disruption to education and training for a large cohort of children and

young people. The YOS is currently working alongside education via a working group to consider the challenges of pupil attendance and quality of ETE provision for those who become known to the service.

- 5.2 To some degree, the restructure of the service was a response to the development of a WG/YJB led 'Blueprint for Youth Justice for Wales'. A Blueprint Implementation Plan was drafted with an outline vision of the changes in the short, medium and longer term. Early Intervention and Prevention and a trauma informed, child focussed approach was central to the contents of the Blueprint, and a National Project Board, incorporating several workstreams took this work forward. However, Cwm Taf YOS had already begun to embed a trauma informed 'relationship based' approach to better meet the needs of young people who enter into the youth justice system and who have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). The continuation of this work has progressed as a priority during 2022/23 and there is a drive to further embed this model of working across the prevention arm of the service as well as those who are referred into YOS from the Law Courts.
- 5.3 The YOS utilises the Welsh Gov't Children and Communities Grant (CCG) to develop, deliver and coordinate prevention services across the Cwm Taf area. Some of this work is coordinated alongside the Resilient Families Service (RFS) and last year the YOS held meetings with colleagues from RFS, Youth Service and YEPS to improve and develop the coordination of early intervention and prevention services. This will go some way to ensuring that resources are better aligned to impact positively upon reducing anti social behaviour and limit the escalation of children into statutory services in the longer term. Cwm Taf is also the only youth justice service in South Wales currently operating a 'Restorative Street Disposal' policy. This means that with the clear agreement of the victim, a restorative intervention is delivered by a trained police officer, and further work undertaken by a YOS case manager if wider needs/risks are identified.
- 5.4 Prevention and Diversionary work now accounts for the majority of Youth Justice Service business, but there is inconsistency in the way in which this work is undertaken and coordinated across all regions in Wales. Subsequently, a task group and a number of workshops have been set up involving youth justice managers across Wales in an attempt to clarify and implement a common set of guidelines and principles to improve delivery of these services.
- 5.5 The YOS has an education training and employment (ETE) team that supports children and young people and to engage with individuals to help them to achieve their potential. The ETE team has developed resources and processes to monitor exclusions and ensure that information flow across agencies is effective. The team also convenes weekly ETE workshops which offers a bespoke, trauma informed service for children with additional learning needs and who are not in education, training or employment. The challenges ahead are clear, more so since the Covid 19 period, which highlight the barriers that young people face in relation to accessing education, training and employment and the potential risks for children to become isolated, involved in ASB and who are often criminally exploited within

the community. YOS is currently identifying those known to the service who are either excluded or home educated, and management are working alongside partners, including Education, to try to resolve some of these issues.

- 5.6 Health (CAMHS) provision within the YOS was an issue for concern by the HMIP inspectorate when the service was last subject to a full joint inspection, and this remains one of the key challenges going forward for the service in the weeks and months ahead. Negotiations with Health previously reported to this Board are still current, and difficulties remain regarding the recruitment of appropriate health provision to the service. Subsequently, during the Autumn, a further letter was sent to the Health CEO from the co chairs of the Offender Management Board to try and resolve this situation. On a positive note, the YOS has, in partnership with Bridgend Youth Justice Services, purchased specialist speech and language provision to assist case managers to better understand the learning needs/styles of children and to achieve better outcomes.

## **6.0 FUTURE CHALLENGES, RISKS AND IMPACT ON SERVICE**


- 6.1 During the past two years, the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on services, with YOS and our partner agencies needing to prioritise critical areas of work to safeguard our most vulnerable children and adults. The closure of some services, such as schools, youth clubs and community facilities during lock down has inevitably had a negative impact. The full nature of this impact is as yet unknown and the partnership including YOS will need to be prepared and flexible to respond to changing demands. Set out within the 2022/23 Youth Justice Plan, we are developing strategies to respond effectively to these demands, including early intervention and prevention work alongside our partners in the medium to longer term.
- 6.2 It should be recognised also that YOS business is very much linked into local authority plans for this year, and future arrangements regarding accommodation, whereby staff can meet safely with children, families and partner agencies in a range of community venues/offices, will be a main priority going forward. Both YOS bases across the region are used to meet families and children face to face as well as to facilitate one to one supervision with staff and team meetings. Previous YOS accommodation at Unit 2 in Ty Catrin is now also used by our partners in Children's Services and this arrangement has encouraged joint staffing supervision sessions to assist in complex cases where YOS and 16 Plus teams are involved with an individual child, parents and carers.
- 6.3 Our work with victims of crime will continue to be at the centre of all open interventions with children and young people and we are currently working to progress further capacity within the team to ensure that the voice of the victim is heard at Referral Order and Out of Court Disposal panels and during the course of any intervention.

- 6.4 A joint regional exploitation strategy is currently being developed across RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend. This should promote a shared understanding of the exploitation of children and young adults to adopt a contextualised safeguarding approach across the region.
- 6.5 Following an uplift in in central government spending on youth justice over the coming three years, the YJB has now developed a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that focusses on YOS activity as a multi agency local partnership to ensure that the breadth and success of the work that youth justice services carry out is captured. Therefore, the KPI's will now apply to all children with which YOS are carrying out an intervention and not just those who are on our statutory caseloads who have been convicted by the law courts. One of the KPI's will measure the effectiveness of YOS Management Board attendance and general governance of the service. Subsequently, a development morning is planned with the Offender Management Board in February to ensure a shared understanding by partners of future expectations across all of the KPIs.
- 6.6 In November last year the Ministry of Justice announced a commitment to fund the Turnaround Programme, which will offer multi-year funding to all Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales over three financial years (22/23, 23/24 and 24/25). For Cwm Taf YOS, this equates to over 400k over the three year period. This will enable the service and local strategic partners to expand best practice in early intervention and deliver evidence-based interventions. The programme has been designed, using an Early Help approach to enable YOTs to improve outcomes for children on the cusp of the justice system, with the ultimate aim of preventing them going on to (re)offend. The YOS is currently recruiting staff to take this work forward.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The new structure and the increase in staff and management resilience within the prevention arena has certainly improved capacity for developing our practice across the Cwm Taf region. However, there is still much work to be done to embed new practice, such as the child first and trauma informed approach and deliver a more targeted needs led service, alongside partners, that continues to be effective and outcome focussed.
- 7.2 The YOS has yet to receive confirmation of grant funding from the Youth Justice Board for the next financial year, the outcome of which could potentially impact on future service delivery. However, should it continue to remain stable and enable the YOS to embed new roles and responsibilities, then the service is well placed to deliver better outcomes for children, families and victims of crime.

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document (s)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>

<p>Cwm Taf Youth Justice Plan 2022/23</p>	<p>13/01/23</p>	 <p>YJ Plan 2022-23 Cwm Taf YOS.docx</p>
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CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE  
GWASANAETH TROSEDDU IEUENCID CWM TAF  
WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR COMMUNITIES  
GWETHIO GYDA PHOBL IFANC A'U CYMUNEDAU

# Youth Justice Plan 2022/23

<b>Service</b>	Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service
<b>Service Manager/ Lead</b>	Lyndon Lewis Head of Service, Youth Offending Service
<b>Chair of YJS Board</b>	Paul Mee Group Director Community & Children's Services, Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC  Lisa Curtis Jones Chief Officer, Social Services, Merthyr Tydfil CBC

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## Foreword

This youth justice plan aims to prioritise against new initiatives within the national and local youth justice system, such as the 'Blueprint for Youth Justice in Wales'. A number of priorities set out within the last youth justice plan action plan 2021/22 will remain priorities for the year ahead. There is a clear impetus to build upon the restructure of the service completed in August last year, designed to provide a stronger focus on developing early intervention and prevention work, and this very much mirrors the priorities set out in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Annual Plan for 2022/23. The restructure has been essential in order to better meet service demand and enables the YOS to further embed and develop a trauma informed, relationship based approach with children and young adults within prevention, as well as statutory services.

YOS staff have demonstrated their resilience and flexibility in difficult circumstances during the past two years in order to best support children and families and victims of youth crime. Staff well being will continue to be a priority and the YOS management team will ensure that support is made available to those staff who require it.

The YOS consistently demonstrates its effectiveness to the Offender Management Board via case studies presented by practitioners on a quarterly basis. This year, the decision by members to prioritise case studies within the agenda to allow quality time for discussion by all partners has proved beneficial in creating an improved and shared understanding of the practical difficulties, barriers and achievements. The cases have illustrated effective inter agency working, whilst highlighting the challenges of working with children who present with very complex needs.

One of the main challenges during the coming year includes a partnership approach to working with children and families to enable access to education, training and employment opportunities. This work, led by an internal YOS ETE team has been a highlight of the work carried out by the service during the past year, and has been central in identifying those children with additional learning needs (ALN). The work has benefitted from the input and support of an educational psychologist and managers within the education dept to ensure that children can receive their educational entitlement. Appropriate health provision for the YOS, currently being negotiated, will enable the YOS to shape the model of the service to add value to a trauma informed, relationship based approach that will meet the needs of children, young adults, families and victims and to achieve better outcomes in the longer term.

Therefore, this plan sets out the priorities following structural change which began in 2019/20 and illustrates the progress we have made to date, identifies the potential risks and challenges that lie ahead and the implications for future service delivery.

Paul Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services, Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC	Lisa Curtis Jones Chief Officer, Social Services, Merthyr Tydfil CBC
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## 1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

***Cwm Taf YOS is committed to working in partnership to deliver early intervention, prevention and statutory services that will enable children to desist from offending and anti social behaviour, and create opportunities for them to realise their full potential.***

***The vision is underpinned by a 'child first,' trauma informed approach to all aspects of our work to achieve better outcomes for children, young adults and victims of crime.***

The Youth Justice Plan for Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) 2022/23 is produced in accordance with the duty imposed within Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for each local authority, in consultation with partner agencies, to formulate and implement a Youth Justice Plan each year. This plan aims to set out how youth justice services in the area are to be provided and funded, and what functions the Youth Offending Service will carry out. This is the sixth plan that has been submitted for the Cwm Taf region since the collaboration of the two local authority areas in 2014.

The plan mirrors the Youth Justice Board's 'Child First Strategy set out within the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Strategic Plan 2021-2024, and promotes practice that builds on children's strengths, enabling them to make a positive contribution to their communities and to stay safe. As mentioned above, the work of the YOS cross cuts with the priorities set out in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) Annual Plan 2022/23 and the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership Delivery Plan. The CTMSB plan is focussed on an improved approach to public protection concerns through the development of an 'Exploitation Strategy' that clearly sets out how we respond to, and monitor practice relating to criminal exploitation, radicalisation and modern slavery, whilst strengthening links to other partnerships across the region.

The changes and challenges outlined above has led to the consideration of 7 key priorities for Cwm Taf YOS during the next financial year:

- ***Maintain staff well being***
- ***Embed Child First approach into practice***
- ***Prevention and Diversion Services***
- ***Education, Training and Employment***
- ***Health provision***
- ***Exploitation***
- ***Develop and monitor quality assurance processes within YOS QA and Case Manager forums***

The priorities are aimed at;

- Improving our understanding of the needs of the YOS cohort
- Building upon improving meaningful partnership working
- Better outcomes for children, young adults and victims of crime
- Develop and maintain clear lines of governance and improve accountability of the Board

The YOS is monitored by a YJB Performance Oversight Board (POB) regarding the rate and frequency of reoffending, the use of custody and numbers of first time entrants (FTE's) into the youth justice system.

The YOS currently submits local data in relation to education, training and employment, substance misuse, accommodation and mental health, and this data is shared with Welsh Government and other key stakeholders. However, a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are being developed that will better reflect the work, and performance of the service.

## 2. Child First

Cwm Taf YOS has been proactive in developing a child first approach which treats children as children and seeks to ensure that they are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerability or the challenges they face. Despite the reduction in the numbers of children who enter into the criminal justice system, the service is currently dealing with larger numbers who are on the cusp of the system and who present with varied and complex needs. This situation has been exacerbated by the negative impact of the Covid 19 pandemic as illustrated in other sections of this plan, and which includes data in relation to education and school attendance (refer to section 6 under ETE). The YOS is currently working alongside education via a working group to consider the challenges of pupil attendance and quality of ETE provision for those who become known to the service.

By restructuring the service in 2021, Cwm Taf YOS has increased its investment in prevention and diversion services and is developing systems to enable a targeted approach, so that we can identify the right support for individuals and families at the right time. This approach is reflected in our early assessment prevention processes which seeks to recognise the underlying needs of the child and remove judgement bias and discriminatory language.

The YOS has a Child First 'Champion' within the team who has led on the implementation of a Child First Strategy with accompanied guidance for staff, and this very much reflects the central approach and guiding principles set out in the Youth Justice Board's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024. The YOS understands the need to analyse local data in relation to all children who have protected characteristics under the Equality act 2010 whilst recognizing the over representation in the criminal justice system of children who are looked after (CLA). The recent 'All Wales Protocol, Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young Adults' sets out best practice for avoiding the criminalisation of children who are looked after. Current local data for Cwm Taf relates to Out of Court Disposal (OoCDs) and Court Orders between April 2021 – March 2022, with 12% of 'children looked after' subject to OoCDs and 28% for the smaller cohort who received a court order.

The YOS will continue to monitor and analyse data on an annual basis, recognizing that trends and challenges will change overtime. As such, a YOS diversity panel will aim to develop child friendly resources that will further assist practitioners to obtain accurate data in relation to the child's experience/identification. The above is outlined in the current Cwm Taf YOS Child First action plan.



Cwm Taf YOS Child  
First Strategy final d

### 3.Voice of the child

Cwm Taf YOS has set out in its 'Child First Practice Guidance' the importance of directly exploring with the child their identity and personal experiences of past trauma and the impact this has upon them and how it contributes to their behaviour. Children are heard using a variety of strategies. This includes the self assessment tool at the start, review and end stages of their intervention.

In January 2022, a 'voice of the stakeholder' audit was conducted across 8 cases. The questions were drawn from the Domain 1, 2 and 3 of the HMIP Inspectorate documents, and the results found that there were good opportunities for the child's voice to be heard at assessment, review and closure stage. There are also opportunities for feedback through self assessments (including a version for younger children), individual learning plans (ILPs), Learning Styles and Speech and Language questionnaires. Daily recorded contacts also evidenced a good deal of children's comments and views, and although this was more difficult to collate, it demonstrated positive and trusting relationships between case managers and children.

The child's thoughts and feelings about YOS service delivery and interventions they have experienced (in both prevention and statutory cases) are completed by an independent evaluator within the service.

Management review of cases for Youth Rehabilitation Orders and Referral Order Panels also captures the views of children regarding their YOS experience and how it can be developed or improved.

The YOS plans to gain expertise advice from children's commissioning panel in respect of its use of child friendly language on plans and forms. This panel is Welsh Government supported and is led by children and young people.

The YOS currently uses an evaluation toolkit which matches to the devolved indicators via a 'Viewpoint' system. This enables responses in respect of education, substance misuse, health, accommodation and restorative services for both adult and child victims of crime.

The YOS internal education team has set up an individual learning questionnaire and uses these to support children to formulate a YOS education plan. These documents will inform multi agency Additional Learning Needs (ALN) plans or other Education planning meetings to formulate education plans for children accessing YOS services who are experiencing barriers in education, training or employment.

The following projects offer children opportunities to have their voice heard via participation and engagement;

**Youth Outreach Service** – this multidisciplinary team led by a YOS Coordinator alongside Police and Substance Misuse workers attends identified ASB hotspots on a weekly basis across the Cwm Taf region to engage with children within their own communities during evenings and weekends. This project consults with children and feeds their information back to Police problem solving groups and ASB forums.

An example of this is the recent project where children were invited onto the YOS vehicle to discuss beauty products and personal and sexual health care. The children (primarily female) were keen to engage and informed the team members that they would like some craft activities for the summer. It transpired they did not necessarily want to attend a youth club, but wanted internet access and opportunities for casual activities such as jewellery making or other small craft items they could then keep for themselves. This information will form part of the 2022 Summer (activities) Programme.

**Right Hook Project** – children attend for up to 12 weeks using the Fight for Peace model of boxing/martial art discipline alongside personal development. Children are consulted during their personal development time to offer their opinions on various local matters that have happened or are emerging. Examples of this includes discussion around carrying knives or sharp items for protection and awareness raising about self harming.

The information provided by children can be used for individual interventions or feedback to Police or other appropriate agencies, eg, Transport for Wales, or intelligence for the Youth Outreach Service staff to use as needed.

The YOS submits examples of the engagement and participation staff undertake with young people to the Safeguarding Board via the Engagement Participation and Communication (EPC) sub group on a quarterly basis. The nature and extent of this work is being monitored by the group which is attended by partners across the partnership and is chaired by the YOS Head of Service.

#### **Practice example**

*A CLA child known to YOS was on the cusp of losing her placement at a care home following a continuous spell of absconding behaviour. The YOS Case Manager discussed thoughts and feelings linked to her behaviour, and she described her lived experience during the day as being one where she could keep busy and distract herself. She further described going to bed as a period of time when dark thoughts would fill her head and getting up and out of the house was the only way she could manage her feelings. This child had severe and many adverse childhood experiences, the most recent being vilified by her family for reporting her brother as perpetrating sexual abuse against her for a long period of time.*

*A YOS volunteer was introduced to the child who agreed to stay up with her during the late evenings and remain there until such time as she felt settled. A trusting relationship was developed over time and the child eventually agreed to walk outside the home for 10 – 20 minutes during the night until such time that she became tired and came back into the home to fall asleep safely.*

#### 4. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Cwm Taf is currently the only region in Wales that is overseen by a joint group of senior managers responsible for both children and adults who enter the criminal justice system or are on the periphery of entering into the youth justice system and is known as the Offender Management Board (OMB). The OMB was established to support the implementation of a consistent and effective system of offender management and to ensure effective accountability and scrutiny of service provision and performance. In Cwm Taf, this includes the provision of diversionary work, which mainly involves out of court disposals (OoCD), Restorative Street Disposals (known as YRDs in Cwm Taf), and early intervention and prevention services.

The Offender Management Board meets on a quarterly basis and is co-chaired by the Group Director, Community & Children's Services, in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Chief Officer, Social Services in Merthyr Tydfil. This arrangement ensures appropriate representation and level of decision making and influence across both local authority areas. The OMB reports to the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership (CSP), and the YOS Head of Service completes a quarterly highlight report for the CSP.

The Board is well represented by all key statutory partners, as well as non statutory partners where these add value, and membership has been sufficiently consistent to enable continuity of approach during the past few years. The inclusion of elected members on the Board enables effective awareness and communication through to the relevant political structures, promoting a level of scrutiny across two local authority areas. The Deputy Leader of Merthyr Tydfil and the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People RCT are attendees on the Board. A full list of current Board members can be found in Appendix 1.

The inclusion on the Board of the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner also ensures an effective means of communication that assists the YOS to align its priorities with the South Wales Police and Crime Plan 2019 - 23 and assists in raising awareness of other strategic national priorities.

The YOS management team continues to ensure that it communicates the work it undertakes to the Board and completes a highlight report to demonstrate its progress or to highlight areas of concern. For example, in the two Board meetings held this year (2022), YOS managers have provided examples of service developments regarding service user feedback processes (including victims of crime), education, training and employment and early intervention and prevention services. Also, Board members submit a Highlight Report template designed to highlight areas of concerns or good practice in relation to offending behaviour. This further promotes a culture of accountability for the Board whilst strengthening governance and links to other strategic groups.

Furthermore, the Board has been advised on the inspection findings of other youth justice services across the South Wales region to gain a better understanding of the issues at hand and how they may, or may not, relate to our own service. The evidence we provide to the Board therefore offers some assurances to Board members regarding performance, staffing, resources and areas we would like to improve, but in the longer term to foster a forum with which to invite discussion and challenge on a more regular basis.



YOS Managers have maintained their attendance and responsibilities within the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and represent YOS on a number of Safeguarding Board sub groups. The YOS Head of Service chairs the Engagement, Participation and Communication (EPC) sub group, and much of the engagement work initiated by the YOS is captured within this forum. YOS Team Managers are involved in Child Practice Reviews (CPR) when necessary and one Team Manager has undertaken the role of a CPR reviewer on two occasions during the past 6 months.

An Offender Management Board highlight report, which outlines the work of the OMB, is provided to the Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Steering Group by the YOS Head of Service on a quarterly basis, and in the same timescales the progress of the OMB is reported to the South Wales Criminal Justice & Integrated Offender Manager Board (SWCJ&IOM) where the Cwm Taf Head of Service currently represents the 6 South Wales Youth Offending Services.

The YOS Management team recognises that it can do more to improve the knowledge base and understanding of Board members regarding the work carried out by YOS staff on a day to day basis. A quarterly YOS bulletin has now been developed that will go some way to achieving this.

## **5.Resources and services**

This section outlines how the Cwm Taf YOS uses its YJB grant, it's partner contributions and other resources in order to improve services that will benefit, children, young adults, families and victims to improve service delivery and achieve better outcomes.

### **Trauma Informed Practice (TIP)**

Since the completion of the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) pilot in Cwm Taf, the YOS has ensured that trauma informed practice remains one of the priorities and we have continued to embed a 'relationship based approach' (RBP) across the service. The key characteristics of this model are underpinned by the Trauma Recovery Model (Skuse and Matthew 2015) and an assessment of the child's position within the model.

This work has been greatly assisted by the YOS having a trauma informed 'specialist lead worker' (also seconded to the YJB) who has been instrumental in terms of developing practice in this area, providing guidance and support to case managers whilst liaising with colleagues in partner agencies. The YOS has devised an action plan to record how we will embed Trauma Informed Practice in the short and longer term, providing staff consultation and formulation meetings (currently without the psychology input). We have identified trauma 'champions' across the four teams and have focused on training to better reflect this approach in assessments and intervention plans.

We have benefitted considerably from ECM being reinstated by FACTS and the YOS has been proactive in referring in relevant cases. This resource has now been extended to include referrals from the prevention arm of the service where we are dealing with increasing numbers of children presenting with complex needs. The development of trauma informed practice continues to be one of our priorities for the forthcoming year.

### **Health**

During 2021-22, we continued to strive towards re-configuring health services within the YOS.

The YOS lost a 2 day mental health post (CAMHS) within this period and has since been negotiating for this post to be reinstated. It is reassuring that this provision was recently agreed, however the nature of the allocation to the service has yet to be confirmed, and CAMHS are currently identifying an appropriate worker to fulfil this role. It is likely this worker will focus on staff consultations initially, however, discussions will continue as to whether they can work towards undertaking forensic assessments and interventions.

In 2020-21, the YOS made the decision to increase our speech and language time and secured funding for a worker to deliver this service two days a week. Although in 2021-22, a new SLA was devised reflecting this change, the YOS Speech and Language Therapist has been on a period of long term sick leave. We have had a replacement worker, but Health have not been able to commit to the full two day contribution. It is anticipated the worker will return to work shortly and this will enable us to meet the needs of the cohort in terms of assessments at a time when we are seeing a significant increase in referrals. It will also enable us to develop the service further, providing interventions alongside other partner organisations such as Courts and Police to improve outcomes for children.

In 2020-21, we reduced our Health Visitor specialist time from 1 ½ posts to one part time worker (four days a week) as it was anticipated that the additional money (contribution from Health) could buy in psychology time to enhance our trauma informed practice. Negotiations are currently ongoing regarding this resource. It is reassuring that in the meantime, agreement has been reached for our Health Visitor time to be increased to full time hours from 1<sup>st</sup> August this year. As an interim measure, Health are confirming if they can provide us with Psychology time from generic CAMHS and it is our intention that this post will offer a higher level of input 'in house' for some of the more complex children, whilst complimenting the Enhanced Case Management provision led by FACTS across Wales.

## **Substance Misuse**

Much of the funding relating to this area is provided by the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). In addition to undertaking assessments and delivering interventions (on a one to one or group basis depending on need), as part of their role, the specialist substance misuse workers deliver training and also contribute to the delivery of any relevant campaigns being run by the Home agency (Barod).

Changes have been made to the substance misuse referral process whereby the substance misuse workers are allocated a case prior to a formal referral. This system is aligned with the Cwm Taf YOS trauma informed model and has the aim of improving engagement in the process and better managing the sequencing of interventions being provided to the child.

The three substance misuse workers have been providing specialist information and advice to children as part of a weekly evening outreach project run by the YOS, in partnership with the Police. We hope to develop their role in relation to outreach over the following year and anticipate it will be an invaluable resource for this project.

A quarterly outcome meeting has been held which is attended by the YOS manager with responsibility for substance misuse and a Barod Manager, in addition to the three Substance Misuse Workers. The group use this meeting to routinely QA a case from

start to finish (assessment, intervention and exit strategy). The focus of this meeting is also to review quarterly returns and identify any significant trends and gaps in resources. Any barriers to service delivery will then be escalated from this forum to the Offender Management Board (OMB).

The substance misuse team has experienced some instability during 2021-22 as a result of staff turnover within the team, however, we are now up to full capacity with the priority during the forthcoming year to create stability within the team and continue to develop the service.

### **Victim services and restorative interventions**

The Restorative Justice Action Group continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis and this includes membership from ASB teams, Community Safety Partnership, Victim Focus, YOS and Police. This group focuses on restorative justice service development and actions across the two authorities

The Victim Liaison officer now attends the Bureau Panel on a regular basis to provide an individual victim perspective in the event the victim doesn't wish to participate.

The Victim Liaison Officer is currently extending their work remit to include assessment and restorative planning for those victims of children receiving an RJ Street Disposal to ensure their voice is heard. They also have further opportunities to participate in a restorative intervention should they agree.

### **6. Progress on previous plan**

The YOS made significant progress on the seven priorities set out in the 2021/22 plan. These included;

**Restructure.** Much hinged on the completion of the restructure of the service in order that we could implement a new set of roles and responsibilities for those staff who were asked to, or who had applied to take up a new position in the service. The YOS intends to review the impact of the changes in August this year and monitor progress against our National Standards and the Blueprint for Youth Justice.

However, already we have evidenced significant changes and are developing ways to monitor and evaluate prevention and diversionary activity alongside partners in order to avoid duplication of work and ensure we are targeting the right children at the right time. First time entrants (FTE's) remain at relatively low numbers.

**Embedding relationship based, trauma informed practice** has continued at pace, and we have upskilled staff on a regular basis, whilst developing the role of four Trauma Champions within each of the four teams.

**Education Training and Employment.** As outlined in this plan, significant work has been undertaken regarding ETE including a monitoring system to capture those who are most at risk of becoming excluded and are able to identify positive outcomes as a result.

**Health.** Following a number of meetings with Health, whereby additional services for the YOS have been agreed, securing the appropriate health provision to develop our service has not been without its challenges this year. Negotiations are still ongoing in order to

ensure CAMHS provision within the teams, and this work is being monitored closely by the Cwm Taf Offender Management Board.

**Transitions and Resettlement.** The YOS has adopted the YJB proposal for 'Constructive Resettlement' and YOS staff have attended all training offered to enhance their understanding of this work. The YOS has also developed its own policy, and it is the intention to monitor outcomes for those young adults who have, and who will transition in the coming year. To date however, numbers have been relatively low.

**Quality Assurance** is central to all YOS business and the YOS QA forum reconvened as planned in order to monitor and audit specific pieces of work to inform future service delivery. The impact of the National Standards work has been shared with partners at Board level, and this work, including future progress and improvements required, will be ongoing.

**Staff well being** will remain a priority as it did last year and as planned, an appraisal system has now been reintroduced. YOS chose not to implement a new local authority system (CARI) to improve staff well being. All staff have been asked to consider what the priorities are for the coming year and to contribute to this plan should they wish.

## 7. Performance and priorities

The service continues to maintain its performance against YJB national performance measures, in particular the continued reduction in first time entrants into the criminal justice system and the fact that no child from the Cwm Taf area has been sentenced by the courts into a custodial setting since early 2019.

The YOS is currently considering the implications of a new set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that in part, will better reflect the work being undertaken across all areas of the service.

### Early Intervention, Prevention and Diversion Services

The YOS utilises the Welsh Government Children and Communities Grant (CCG) 'Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People' to develop, deliver and coordinate much of its preventative interventions and services across the Cwm Taf area. The YOS is continuing to align services to reflect the demands and expectations of the Blueprint for Youth Justice in Wales. ([https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/youth-justice-blueprint\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/youth-justice-blueprint_0.pdf)).

The Blueprint has an impact on all aspects of Youth Offending Service work with a focus on four key areas:

- a call for targeted activity for those who have not yet entered the youth justice system.
- the need for diversionary practice for those participating in pre-court interventions.
- a national trauma-informed approach to practice
- an effective system of oversight and measure of outcomes.

The restructure of the service completed in August last year was formulated to recognise the increasing volume and complexity of children being referred through these early pathways. A Prevention Team now covers Rhondda and Taf and a second team covers Cynon and Merthyr Tydfil. Each team also has specialists and projects which cover the whole of Cwm Taf and includes, Police, Education, Training and Employment team, Family Support, Antisocial behaviour work, a Youth Outreach Service and a Reparation Officer.

As noted in section 3 above, **The Youth Outreach Service** has now acquired its own vehicle (bus) to visit hotspots and engage with children and young people, and the work of the YOS and relevant projects was noted in the Wales Safer Communities, Anti social Behaviour Awareness week in mid July. The Offender Management Board receives updates on the work of the outreach service, which, along with the Right Hook Project seeks to prevent those who engage in anti social behaviour from escalating from becoming involved in serious violence. Youth Outreach works with a range of partners, including police to target areas where anti social behaviour is prevalent and provides targeted diversionary responses when necessary. The work is mainly undertaken on Friday nights, GCSE result times, Halloween etc. The YOS works closely alongside the Community Safety Team and is represented on the Problem Solving Groups throughout the Northern BCU. (specific information relating to outreach work can be viewed in appendix 6).

The YOS is also coordinating the Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAP) project, which brings together local organisations with a shared interest in preventing underage drinking, and will include schools, retailers, police, youth services and local councils The CAP will be covering all of the Cynon valley but mainly focusing on Aberdare town centre & Mountain Ash areas due to the increase of youth ASB and alcohol use. We are aiming to tackle the issues before the start of the summer holidays and surveys being undertaken by children in schools and those known to preventative services will give the project an idea on what areas to focus on. We will undertake publicity for the project and for all the partners involved.

The YOS facilitates a multi agency Prevention Panel to help track the large number of referrals. The panel sits weekly and can track referrals, allocations and closures. The panel is able to discuss and check on children who are referred to YOS through a number of pathways, such as Information Advice & Assistance, CSP and Police systems. This helps to ensure the child receives the right service at the correct time.

The Prevention service also delivers the Relationship Based Programme (RPB) to support children and their families to recover from historic trauma. This exciting opportunity also brings challenges in the form of managing children and families for a longer period of time, however, it can create sustainable change in individuals and family functioning.

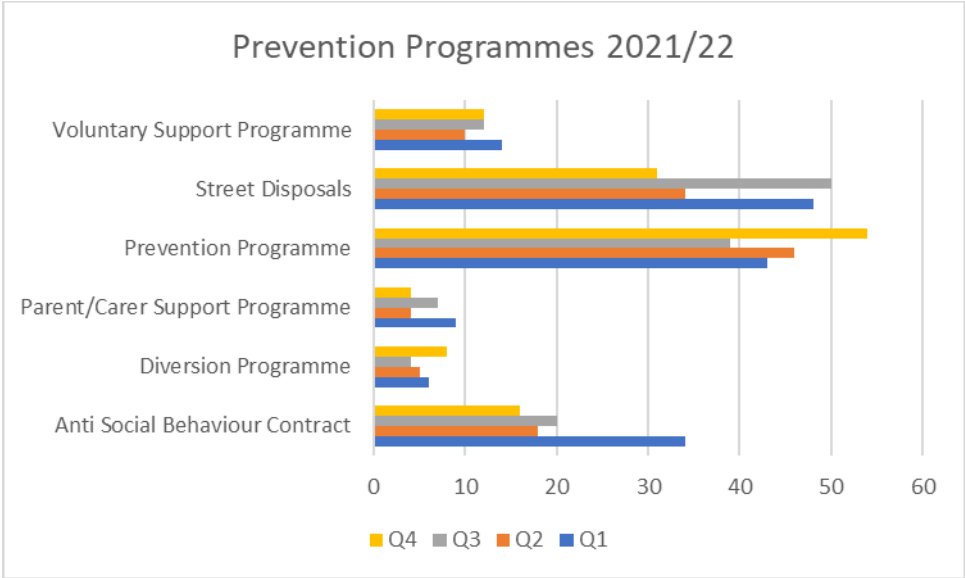
YOS Prevention is well represented and keen to add value to the Families First agenda across Cwm Taf to support families to resolve presenting issues before they impact negatively on the young person. In February this year, a development morning involving the YOS Prevention team and RCT Resilient Families Service (RFS) took place to look at how the services can interact more effectively together. In Merthyr Tydfil, this work is coordinated via the Team Around the Family (TAF) project and the YOS is represented on the TAF Panel by a YOS Team Manager.

In the event children and families consent to support from our services, an allocated case worker will undertake either a Prevention assessment for first/second offences or an AssetPlus assessment. The assessment considers all aspects of risk and prompts case managers to consider Adverse Childhood Experiences and Additional Learning Needs to inform multi agency planning.

The YOS Prevention Managers have been significant contributors to the YJB’s Prevention and Diversion Project, providing prevention case studies to inform the direction of the work going forward. A set of recommendations for the project will be consulted upon later this year.

This year, the YOS has also created the role of a Return to Learning Officer, part of who’s role is to link in with schools to assist in reducing levels of exclusions and absenteeism and to work with individual children who may be on the cusp of anti social or offending behaviour.

The YJB definition of Prevention and Diversion work has been circulated to all YOS staff in order to promote a shared common language and understanding of the work across the service.



Intervention Type	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
Anti Social Behaviour Contract	34	18	20	16	<b>88</b>
Diversion Programme	6	5	4	8	<b>23</b>
Parent/Carer Support Programme	9	4	7	4	<b>24</b>
Prevention Programme	43	46	39	54	<b>182</b>
Street Disposals	48	34	50	31	<b>163</b>
Voluntary Support Programme	14	10	12	12	<b>48</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>528</b>

**Diversion Work - Out of Court Disposals**

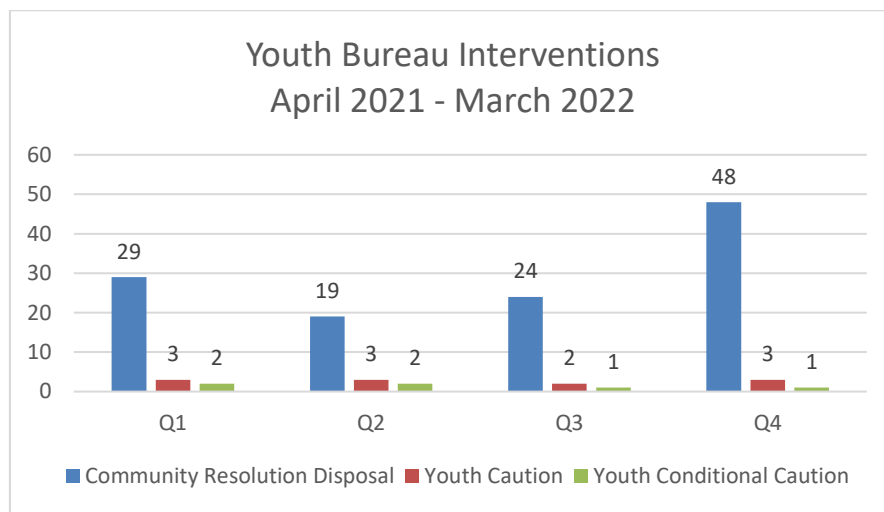
The YOS is currently looking at how we can resume our Out of Court Disposals work by using a hybrid approach to our youth bureau panel arrangements, with a preferred approach to a full meeting involving police, YOS staff, children and families and volunteers. A child can receive one of three outcomes when they are diverted to the youth

bureau for an out of court disposal depending upon the nature of the offence or whether the child has previously received a voluntary intervention;

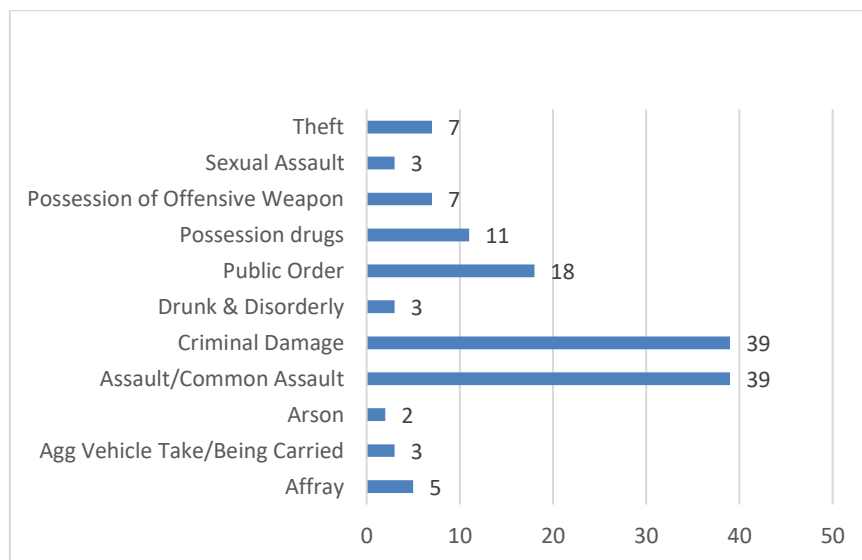
- Youth Caution (YC) - counting as a 'first time entrant' into the youth justice system.
- Youth Conditional Caution (YCC) - as above.
- Community Resolution Disposal (CRD) – a voluntary intervention.

The high numbers of youth bureau voluntary interventions continues to divert young people from the Youth Justice System. The Bureau assessment process includes a prevention assessment for those who offend for the first time and who are deemed low risk, however, ASSETPlus has continued to be the main assessment tool used in the majority of cases.

There were 137 Bureau interventions commencing during 2021/22. This is an increase on last year's figure of 117.



**Offence Types (Bureau)**



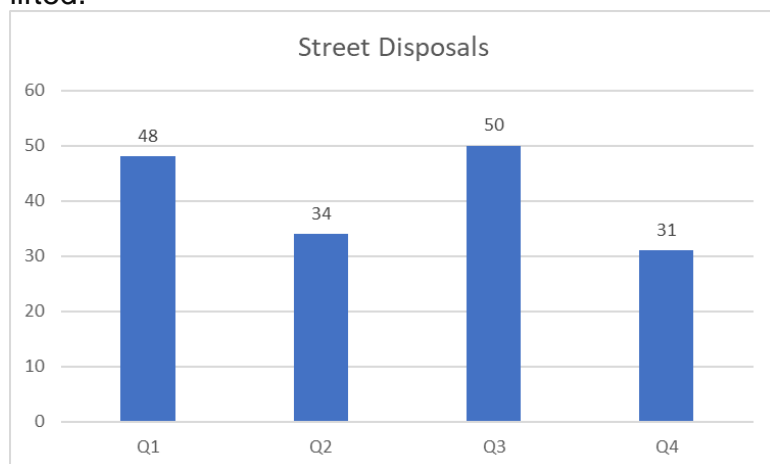
An Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny panel commenced in April 2022 led by Police and Crime Commissioner's office in partnership with South Wales Police, Community Safety, Courts, CPS, YOS and Victim Focus. It is envisaged that this partnership, which includes our colleagues in Bridgend Youth Justice Services, will extend to include Children's

Services and other services where relevant. The purpose of the OoCD scrutiny panel is to quality assure OoCD cases across Cwm Taf Morgannwg to promote development and learning and share positive practice. It will also monitor consistency, timeliness and proportionality of the disposals across the region.

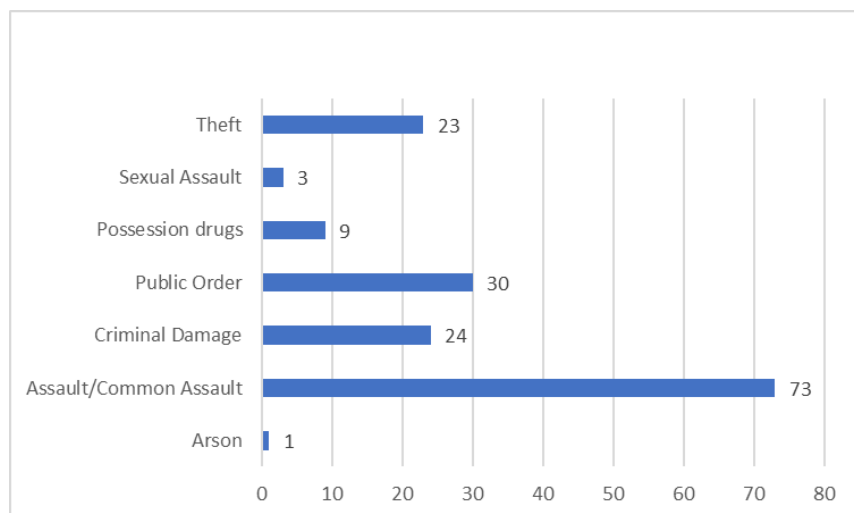
### Diversion work. - Youth Restorative Street Disposals (YRD)

The YOS has created an RJ Street Disposal system in partnership with the policing team, for those children dealt with “on the street” for an offence where the victim has agreed that the offence goes no further. This system prevents a young person being criminalised for a first time offence or having to enter a police station or court for their offence to be dealt with. The YOS provides an offer of a restorative and education session carried out by YOS trained restorative police officers and an assessment visit and further contact with the victim if the victim would like further support. If scores and desistance factors identify a raised level of risk of offending, the intervention offered can be enhanced to meet the needs of the child and their family. Cwm Taf YOS is the first area to offer this system and it is envisaged this process will be rolled out in other areas.

There were a total of 163 restorative street disposals delivered throughout the year, with a significant rise in numbers, compounded by pandemic lockdown restrictions being lifted.



### Offence Types (Street Disposals)





As the offence types data above illustrates, violence related offending accounts for a significant proportion of offending behaviour across Cwm Taf, and the service is currently exploring ways to respond to this concern.

In 2023 there will be a statutory responsibility to develop a Youth Violence Strategy and Development Plan within each region, and Cwm Taf YOS Prevention managers and coordinators have attended workshops in July this year to discuss current research that will inform the Welsh Gov't Strategic Framework. The more immediate conclusions reached includes the need for a strong educative approach and the need to change children's perceptions of the 'risks out there', and the need to protect themselves by carrying their own weapons. It should be noted that the issue of child on parent violence has also shown an increase across the region during the past few years and this will become another area for focus for monitoring this year.

The YOS will be linking in with the Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) to ascertain the views of children and young people in order to develop a strategy that will prove effective for the Cwm Taf area.

It is in the context of the increase in serious violence that the government announced it would bring forward legislation and introduce a serious violence 'duty', legislated for as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. A multi agency approach, focussing on early intervention and informed by local/regional evidence will be central to the work and how we formulate and implement an effective strategy. This work will be monitored by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Serious Violence and Organised Crime (SVOC) Group, chaired by Police and involving the wider partnership across the region.

### **Education, Training and Employment**

The YOS Education team have continued to develop services to ensure effective partnership working is achieved in meeting the Education needs of the child. An updated action plan has been shared with partners and some research has been completed in respect of children who have been excluded or have reduced timetables. This information is now being shared with the Education authorities.

The Education coordinator now sits on a wider range of relevant forums such as school meetings, SEN panel, NEETS operational groups and school exclusions panels. This partnership approach will be extended to include Education Authority meetings for those cases experiencing difficulty and requiring an adjoined partnership plan.

There is also a formalised process in place for children with additional learning needs (ALN) using information from Red Amber Green data, and an ALN YOS framework process flowchart has been produced in partnership with the Education department with the support of an ALN specialist consultant employed by the local authority. The team convenes a weekly ETE workshop which offers a bespoke, trauma informed service for children with additional learning needs and who are not in education, training or employment. The project seeks to ensure all children referred leave the YOS having gained a qualification that is valuable to them and which will build on the child's self esteem and trust in the adults supporting them. Individual learning plans (ILPs) are completed for all children referred into the service, which subsequently informs Individual Education Plans for children with additional learning needs.

Currently the YOS are formulating an exclusions project, funded through Resilient Families Service and will focus on engaging children in education activity to try and alleviate behavioural difficulties and barriers to learning.

In addition, YOS has this year created a Return to Learning Coordinator to link in with and support comprehensive schools across the region.

Data in relation to current education entitlement regarding those children who are known to YOS is set out in Appendix 4.

## **8.National Standards**

The National Standards Action Plan is updated on a regular basis. The document has a red, amber and green coding system for each action and the most urgent priorities are coded red. Amber areas are where there is some progress made and green areas are currently on target. The National Standards Action Plan is as attached as appendix as part of this document and is the most recent plan presented to the Offender Management Board in April this year.

The Red priorities for this year outlined in the National Standards action plan includes:

- The development of YOS Health Service provision and recruitment into those posts
- Services with long waiting lists for children to be assessed

As noted in the 2021/22 plan, the YJB National Standards for Youth Justice has proved essential in both strengthening the awareness of Board members regarding YOS and partner priorities, whilst promoting a strategic understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the partnership.

The National Standards work has become a standing item on the OMB agenda and an action plan is shared and monitored by the Offender Management Board each quarter, with further discussions to update the plan alongside partners when this is required. The work enables YOS to keep a strong focus on partnership working and a RAG system highlights where work is completed or requires further improvement.

However, YOS management is currently looking at options for a different approach to meeting the standards alongside our Board colleagues in order to enhance knowledge and understanding YOS activity and how it relates to work of the wider partnership. Prior to the next OMB, the YOS will revise and focus on the priorities within the action plan that require the most attention. The current NS action plan can be viewed here.



National Standards  
20.21 April 22 updat

## **9.Challenges, risks and issues**

In the last two years, the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on services, with YOS and our partner agencies needing to prioritise critical areas of work to safeguard our most vulnerable children and adults. The closure of some services, such as schools, youth clubs and community facilities during lock down has inevitably had a negative impact. The full nature of this impact is as yet unknown and the partnership including YOS will need to be prepared and flexible to respond to changing demands.

The challenges that lie ahead for the service are in part documented throughout this plan. These include the challenges/risks we face as a partnership as we strive to develop a shared understanding on many of the issues that can impact on outcomes for children known to the service and to the wider community. It should be noted that the areas listed below are not necessarily practice concerns that are identified as risks to service provision, and each will have summarized positive actions or broadly relate to practice that is evolving and making progress.

### Exploitation

A need for a shared understanding of exploitation of children and young adults and how we adopt a contextualized safeguarding approach across the region.

A clear process for the use of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and to better understand 'risk thresholds' across all services.

**Actions** - a joint regional exploitation strategy is currently being developed across RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend.

- YOS team managers to meet on a more regular basis with Children's Services team and service managers. YOS Team Managers will now be invited to a Children's Services 'Interface' meeting on a monthly basis.

### Health provision

Ensuring YOS has the health resources to undertake it's work to a high standard and meets the needs of our cohort to create better outcomes. YOS seeking CAMHS resource and psychologist input to compliment RBP approach to practice.

**Action** – Meetings with Health are currently in progress. Provision to YOS is being monitored by the Offender Management Board.

### Education, training and employment

Support schools to prevent exclusions and absenteeism which can have implications for communities.

**Action** - Internal ETE team developing resources and processes to monitor exclusions and ensuring information flow across agencies is effective.

- YOS is undertaking assessments with children who become known to the service and identifying learning needs.
- YOS staff linking in with primary and comprehensive schools to deliver awareness sessions such as ASB.

### Prevention and Diversion Services.

Challenge is to effectively work alongside partners and improve partnership working alongside other early intervention and prevention services within Cwm Taf, and minimise duplication of work across the partnership.

**Actions** - Development mornings with Resilient Families Service (RFS) and other partners are now taking place to look at improving coordination of prevention services.

- Meeting with RFS undertaken and adjustments made. An example of this is that all offence related cases are appraised by YOS coordinator and the decision is made at YOS whether the work should go to RFS PCSO or to YOS allocation.
- YOS social worker is now situated at Children's Services 'front door' (IAA) to oversee referrals that are offence /ASB related. Currently the cases are picked up by Police to come into YOS, but through PPNs work is also being referred into other agencies.
- Disseminate learning to all staff from Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny panel to inform future service delivery.

### Embed Child First Approach

Challenges includes embedding this approach within YOS to promote longer term outcomes for children and adults.

**Actions** - YOS to implement Child First action plan currently outlined within the YOS Child First Strategy and the YOS has now identified four 'trauma champions' across statutory and prevention teams to promote practice.

- We are currently engaging with partners in CS, RFS, Police and Probation Service to adopt trauma informed practice and to also include within transitions to adulthood.

### Increase knowledge of Board members regarding YOS practice.

Challenge is to consider how we utilise the National Standards action plan to raise awareness of challenges and barriers we face alongside partners.

**Actions** – Discuss at Offender Management Board meeting to promote more effective understanding of partnership working in relation to YOS, Blueprint for Youth Justice in Wales and National Standards for Youth Justice.

- Disseminate a quarterly YOS bulletin to highlight the work of the YOS.

## **11.Evidence-based practice and innovation**

### **Child Play Therapy.**

The YOS currently contributes to the funding of a student placement in Child Play Therapy. The student is an existing YOS practitioner, with extensive experience of working with children known to the prevention arm of the service, has engaged with a number of children and receives regular clinical supervision as a condition of her placement within the YOS. The student is currently developing a play therapy toolkit as part of this exciting new project and a designated room at the YOS office base in Pontypridd has been adapted to enable the sessions to take place.

Child Play Therapy is a method of helping children with social, emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties, and is particularly pertinent to children who have experienced trauma. It provides children with an opportunity to “play out” feelings and problems in a safe and accepting environment, enabling children to help themselves by exploring, processing, problem solving and finding a new narrative. Sessions are underpinned by psychological theory and neurobiological evidence using a non- directive approach, working with conscious and unconscious processes.

The therapeutic ‘Tool-Kit’ available incorporates a wide range of creative arts media including :

- Creative visualisation,
- Storytelling,
- Drama,
- Puppets and Masks,
- Art,
- Music,
- Dance & movement,
- Sand play.

In the UK, **1 in 5** children aged **5 to 16** were identified as having a probable mental health problem in July 2021, a significant increase from 1 in 9 in 2017.

**50%** Of all mental health problems start by the age of 14

**34%** Of those who get referred into NHS services are not accepted into treatment

In targeting children aged 8-13 accessing YOS interventions, it is hoped that therapeutic play practice will offer an alternative to traditional cognitive therapy programmes and will potentially support a cohort of children who’s needs may not meet the threshold for existing support services.

### **QA Audits.**

There have been several themed Quality Assurance audits completed through the Quality Assurance Group. This group consists of Case Managers and specialist champions from each team and is responsible for undertaking peer audit on cases. The audits undertaken by the group have included repeat OOCDS. This audit focused on assessment, plans and interventions. There has been an audit on the *voice of the stakeholder* and also *Disproportionality*. There is a plan to complete the next audit on the HMIP Inspection domain criteria and each case manager will audit one case. Recommendation reports have been compiled for completed audits and these are shared in the case managers forum and in team meetings.

### **Girls Group.**

Cwm Taf YOS recognize that the reason girls commit offences differs to that of boys and which is often a response to emotional well being and issues concerning relationships with parents, partners and friends. The YOS facilitates a girls group to provide a safe base in which to deliver bespoke interventions that helps girls to understand the reasons for their offending.

**The CSCS** course continues to be delivered using innovative methods. This has included online sharing of resources and the production of a section by section resource catalogue for practitioners to use with children for course revision. A volunteer is utilised to coach individual children through the course material.

**ASDAN and Stepping Stones** resources have been written to respond to individual needs of children and there is a plan to utilise a reparation ASDAN award with every child completing reparative activity in the community.

**Volunteer mentors** have been trained to use a resource pack to engage children on Restorative Street Disposals. There has been a range of training undertaken with community volunteers. This has included community mentor training, Referral Order Panel training and Referral Order Panel Chair training.

### **ASB work in Primary Schools**

The YOS has a practitioner delivering ASB workshops to children in primary schools in the RCT area to educate them to stay clear from behaviours in the community that might bring them to the attention of the Community Safety Partnership or youth justice system. The work is delivered in groups via a presentation a feedback form is used to complete at home with parents to gauge how much they understood and to offer further support should they need it.

## 12. Service improvement plan

### YOS Improvement Plan 2022/23

Priority	What will we do?	How will we measure progress?
Staff Well Being	<p>Ensure all staff receive regular supervision.</p> <p>Monitor effectiveness of staff appraisal system reintroduced during Autumn 2021.</p> <p>Well being surveys introduced by local authorities.</p> <p>Free confidential mental health support (CANOPI) has been circulated to staff.</p> <p>Peer to peer support framework (SWARTZ Rounds) are in development to support practitioners in their role.</p>	<p>Monitoring of staff /case records, to include well being checks and training needs.</p> <p>Monitor staff training needs annually (Appraisals) in line with service developments and future demands and priorities.</p> <p>Monitor feedback from surveys.</p> <p>YOS management team will consider staff feedback and provide additional support as required.</p>
Prevention and Diversion Services	<p>Review the impact of the YOS restructure in August 2022 (one year following restructure).</p> <p>Continue to develop a process to monitor and evaluate prevention/diversion activity within YOS to demonstrate impact of a targeted approach and improve the evidence base.</p> <p>Develop effective partnership working with universal prevention services across the region.</p>	<p>Monitor reduction in the duplication of work across all early intervention and prevention services in Cwm Taf region.</p> <p>Monitor diversion and prevention against new YJB key performance indicator for Out of Court Disposals (OoCD) and numbers of first time entrants.</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate diversion activity within the OoCD's Scrutiny Panel. Monitor and evaluate progress against the</p>

		<p>Blueprint for Youth Justice in Wales Prevention workstream.</p> <p>Receive feedback from Families First and Community Safety partners across Cwm Taf region.</p> <p>Improved partnership working, referral and sign posting systems</p> <p>Maintain reduced numbers of first time entrants (FTE's) into the youth justice system.</p>
Embed Child First Approach into YOS practice	<p>Engage key partners in development of trauma informed practice during next 12 months.</p> <p>Continue to train and upskill workforce in trauma informed practice.</p> <p>Monitor effectiveness of Child First 'Champion's role within YOS teams during 2022.</p> <p>YJB Trauma qualification to be offered to staff members as appropriate.</p> <p>Monitor outcomes for those children with additional learning needs</p> <p>Develop and implement a 'child diversion' process for children looked after with police.</p>	<p>Key partner agencies are involved in the development of trauma informed practice across the Cwm Taf region.</p> <p>Increased and improved engagement and positive outcomes for children and young adults.</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate numbers of children and young adults subject to trauma informed practice who reoffend, or who are at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for those children with additional learning needs (ALNs).</p> <p>More children who are looked after are diverted from OoCD's.</p>
Education, Training and Employment (ETE)	Continue to monitor (red, amber, green) system to evaluate effectiveness of ETE provision for children and young adults.	All children with additional learning needs (ALN) have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and assessed against a clear monitoring system, to inform



	<p>Embed mapping progress alongside LA and consultative education staff for those children identified with additional learning needs (ALN).</p> <p>Maintain information flow between YOS ETE team and Education dept and other relevant partner agencies.</p>	<p>Individual Development Plan (IDP).</p> <p>Increased numbers of children and young adults engaged in ETE.</p> <p>Monitor attainment levels against new YJB devolved key performance indicator.</p> <p>Evaluate reasons for pupil absenteeism and exclusion from education provision.</p>
Health provision	<p>Increase YOS Health Visitor hours to 5 days per week by August 2022.</p> <p>Maintain Speech and Language Therapy provision for YOS, negotiated in 2021/22.</p> <p>Continue to negotiate and secure CAMHS provision for YOS and to develop this role to include assessment and direct work with children.</p> <p>Consider ways to secure psychologist provision to develop trauma informed, relationship based practice (RPB).</p> <p>Monitor all health provision within the service and report to OMB on quarterly basis.</p>	<p>Improved outcomes for all children and young adults known to the service and monitor against new YJB key performance indicators.</p>
QA. Build upon work undertaken in 2021 to embed quality assurance into team practice.	<p>Continue to utilise YOS Quality Assurance Group reintroduced into the service in 2021 to undertake audit work and evaluate practice to improve understanding of the needs of the cohort.</p> <p>Ensure the voice of children, families and victims is heard to</p>	<p>Evaluate impact of National Standards Action Plan on the effectiveness of the partnership, governance and service delivery.</p> <p>Improve our understanding of the needs of the YOS cohort.</p>

	<p>influence and inform future service delivery.</p> <p>Monitor National Standards Action Plan quarterly and update alongside key partners.</p>	
Child Criminal Exploitation	<p>Alongside partners across Cwm Taf Morgannwg finalise the Regional Exploitation Strategy that will set out how the partnership will recognise/understand exploitation and to safeguard and empower victims.</p> <p>Develop supporting documentation for practitioners, including toolkits, assessments and referral pathways.</p>	<p>An increased understanding between partners on how we agree and respond to child criminal exploitation, including procedures following a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral.</p> <p>Monitor the impact of the strategy in partnership with relevant agencies..</p>

### 13. Looking Forward

The key priorities for Cwm Taf YOS are set out in the Improvement plan for 2022/23 in section 12, and much of this work is already in progress. In many ways, the plan highlights the need to further embed work undertaken last year, but with a clear emphasis on ensuring a **Child First Approach** becomes an established part of YOS practice for the foreseeable future. This will mean that our interventions are relationship based and that the time is taken to ensure the voice of the child is heard and their views taken into consideration.

The YOS's operational guidance on Relationship Based Practice sets out the process that should enable practitioners to adopt interventions that steers away from disproportionate outcomes, for example for those children who are looked after or who have additional learning needs and require a more bespoke, trauma informed approach to enable better outcomes.

YOS managers are currently in discussions with Police colleagues to discuss the implementation of a process to divert children who are looked after, and who appear at OoCD panels for matters which would be accepted/tolerated within a family home.

#### Health

YOS Management are continuing to negotiate with Health for the provision of a CAMHS resource which ended in 2021. The benefits of this provision would greatly enhance the timeliness of effective interventions and outcomes of children who become known to the service. The Offender Management Board has monitored the work being undertaken on a quarterly basis and has been proactive in engaging Health Senior Management to secure the provision for this financial year.

In addition, the YOS intends to negotiate with Health to explore prospect of part funding a psychologist resource into the service to enhance the work previously and currently being undertaken in relation to Relationship Based Practice and Enhanced Case Management. This work is currently in process.

Furthermore, a service level agreement has now been agreed to provide a Speech and Language Service for two days per week in Cwm Taf YOS, which has been budgeted for in this financial year as a minimum.

### **Prevention and Diversion work**

The YOS are seeking to embed this work following the restructure and understand the importance of developing effective partnership working with other early intervention services across the region. The evaluation of our work in relation to diversion will undoubtedly be more robust as a result of the Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny Panel alongside Bridgend Youth Justice Services and other relevant partners. Furthermore, a review of the YJB key performance indicators and the future inclusion in 2023 of OoCD's will better reflect the numbers and work undertaken with children and young people who are engaging and completing interventions in this area of our work.

However, there are other aspects of prevention and diversion work that takes place within Cwm Taf YOS, much of which is funded by, and reported to Welsh Gov't. A recognition of this activity needs to be highlighted and captured on a consistent basis to ensure that the evidence base for this work can be further identified and developed. As mentioned in section 5, the current project commissioned by YJB, Probation and Association of YOT Managers will go some way to improving how we more accurately monitor the work going forward.

The above cross cuts the priorities set out in the CTM Safeguarding Board Plan 2022/23 with a 'renewed focus on Prevention and Early Intervention work' alongside the need to ensure 'keep our communities safe by working together'. We will seek to inform the work by improving opportunities for children to engage and participate in our work to help identify and understand the challenges ahead.

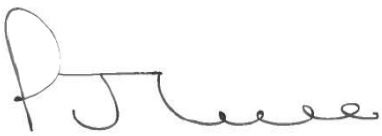


### **Exploitation**

Having previously brought the subject of child criminal exploitation to the attention of the Offender Management Board, often via case studies, there is a further need for a clearer understanding on many aspects of this work during the next year. As such, a regional exploitation strategy is currently being developed to ensure that appropriate governance and reporting structures are in place to manage and respond to exploitation across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.

The submission of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral to a Single Competency Agency has to date been the role of the youth offending service in the event a child is assessed as being exploited outside of the family home and there is still the requirement to adopt a contextualised safeguarding approach to the work and a standardised escalation process for child exploitation where challenging and complex cases exist. A shared understanding and expectations of procedures following the referral is not always apparent, and the YOS has developed a data base to assist with management oversight and where we can monitor procedures and decisions on a case by case basis.

### 13. Sign off, submission and approval

## Cwm Taf Youth Justice Plan 2022/23 Sign Off

NAME AND ROLE	SIGNATURE
<p><b>Paul Mee,</b> <b>Group Director Community &amp; Children's Services,</b> <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council</b> <b>Co-Chair of Local Management Board.</b></p>	
<p><b>Lisa Curtis Jones,</b> <b>Chief Officer, Social Services, Merthyr Tydfil Council</b> <b>Co-Chair of Local Management Board.</b></p>	
<p><b>Lyndon Lewis</b> <b>Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service.</b></p>	

## Common youth justice terms

<b>ACE</b>	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
<b>AIM 2 and 3</b>	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
<b>ASB</b>	Anti social behaviour
<b>AssetPlus</b>	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and adolescent mental health services
<b>CCE</b>	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
<b>Children</b>	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
<b>Child First</b>	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
<b>Child looked-after</b>	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
<b>CME</b>	Child Missing Education
<b>Constructive resettlement</b>	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
<b>Contextual safeguarding</b>	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety
<b>Community resolution</b>	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
<b>EHCP</b>	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
<b>ETE</b>	Education, training or employment
<b>EHE</b>	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school

<b>EOTAS</b>	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
<b>FTE</b>	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
<b>HSB</b>	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
<b>JAC</b>	Junior Attendance Centre
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi agency public protection arrangements
<b>MFH</b>	Missing from Home
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
<b>OOCD</b>	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
<b>Outcome 22/21</b>	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
<b>Over-represented children</b>	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
<b>RHI</b>	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
<b>SLCN</b>	Speech, Language and communication needs
<b>STC</b>	Secure training centre
<b>SCH</b>	Secure children's home
<b>Young adult</b>	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
<b>YJS</b>	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
<b>YOI</b>	Young offender institution

## Appendix 1 Cwm Taf YOS Management Board Members

Name	Agency	Ethnicity	Gender
Paul Mee	Group Director Community & Children's Services, RCT CBC	White	Male
Lisa Curtis Jones	Chief Officer, Social Services MT CBC	White	Female
Emma Richards	National Probation service	White	Female
Annabel Lloyd	Head of Children's Services RCT CBC	White	Female
Lyndon Lewis	Cwm Taf YOS	White	Male
Cllr Julia Jenkins	Merthyr Tydfil CBC	White	Female
Cllr Gareth Caple	Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC	White	Male
Nicola Mahoney	Safer Merthyr Tydfil	White	Female
Clayton Richie	South Wales Police	White	Male
Louise Mann	Cwm Taf Health Board	White	Female
Chris Hole	Head of Community Wellbeing & Prevention MT CBC	White	Male
Nik Bunston	BAROD	White	Female
Cheryl Emery	Housing RCT CBC	White	Female
Gary Black	Community Safety RCT CBC	White	Male
Ceri Jones	Education & Inclusive Services RCT CBC	White	Female
Sian Rees	PCC South Wales	White	Female
Andrea Chichester	Electronic Monitoring Services	White	Female
Ian Hargreaves	Department for Works & Pensions	White	Male
Catherine Cody	Youth Court Magistrate	White	Female
Peter Hopkins	Careers Wales	White	Male
Ian Williams	Dyfodol	White	Male
Josie Blackmore	Victim Support	White	Female
Ryan Evans	Community Safety MT CBC	White	Male

### Scheduled dates of meetings 2022;

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April

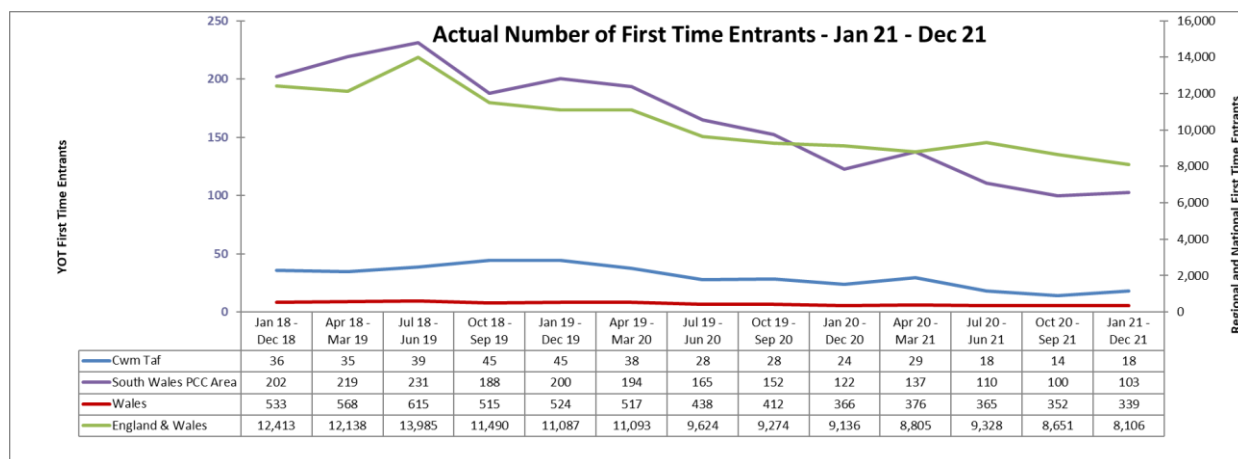
Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October

## Appendix 2 National Performance Indicators

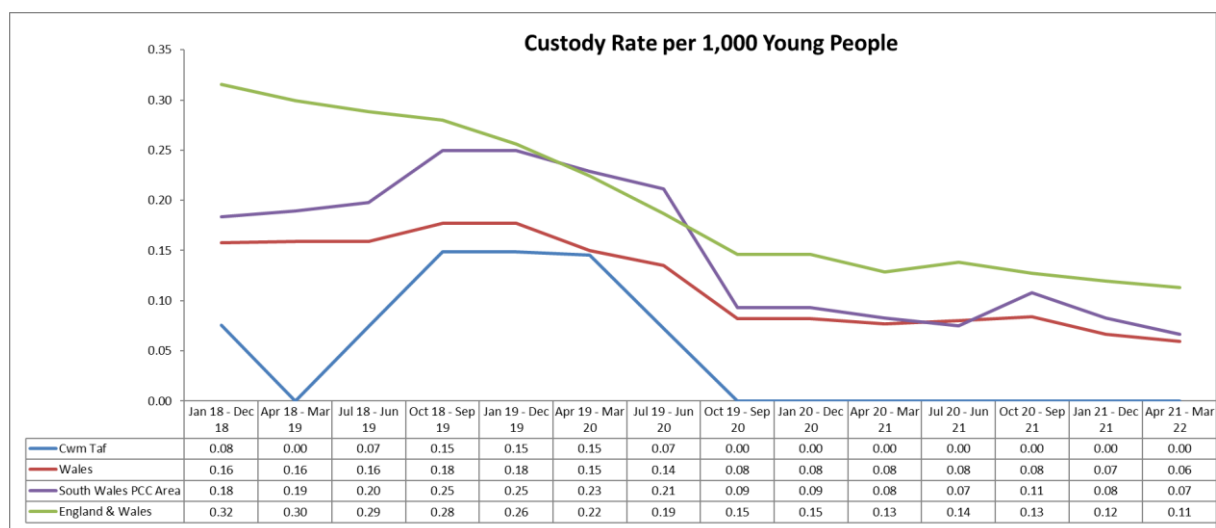
### First Time Entrants (FTE)

This section shows the Cwm Taf performance in the graphs. The data for this indicator comes from the Police National Computer and is published by the Ministry of Justice. The data is shown in rolling full-years for the 12 months to March, July, September, and December of each year.



### Custody

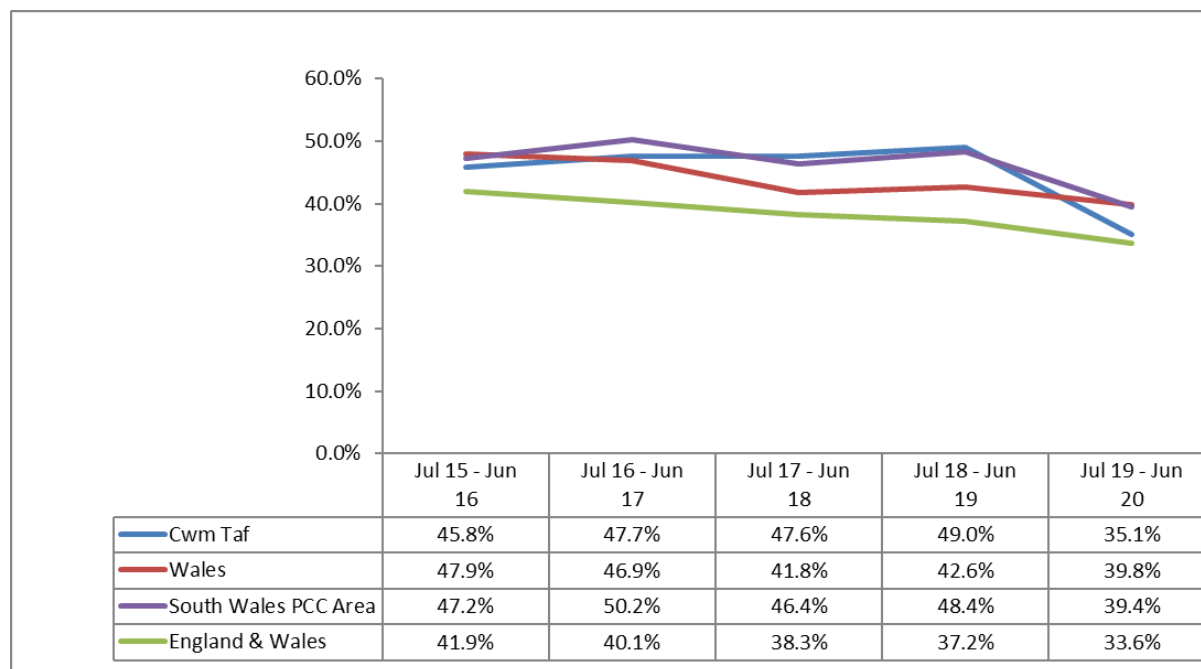
The indicator uses case level data from the YJ Application Framework (historic data - YJMIS) and is the number of custodial sentences in the period given to young people with a local residence aged under 18 years on the date of their first hearing related to the outcome. Successfully appealed sentences are discounted. If a young person was given the same type of custodial sentence on the same day to be served concurrently or consecutively, they will only be counted once. This data is also presented as a rate per 1,000 young people in the 10 to 17 local general population.





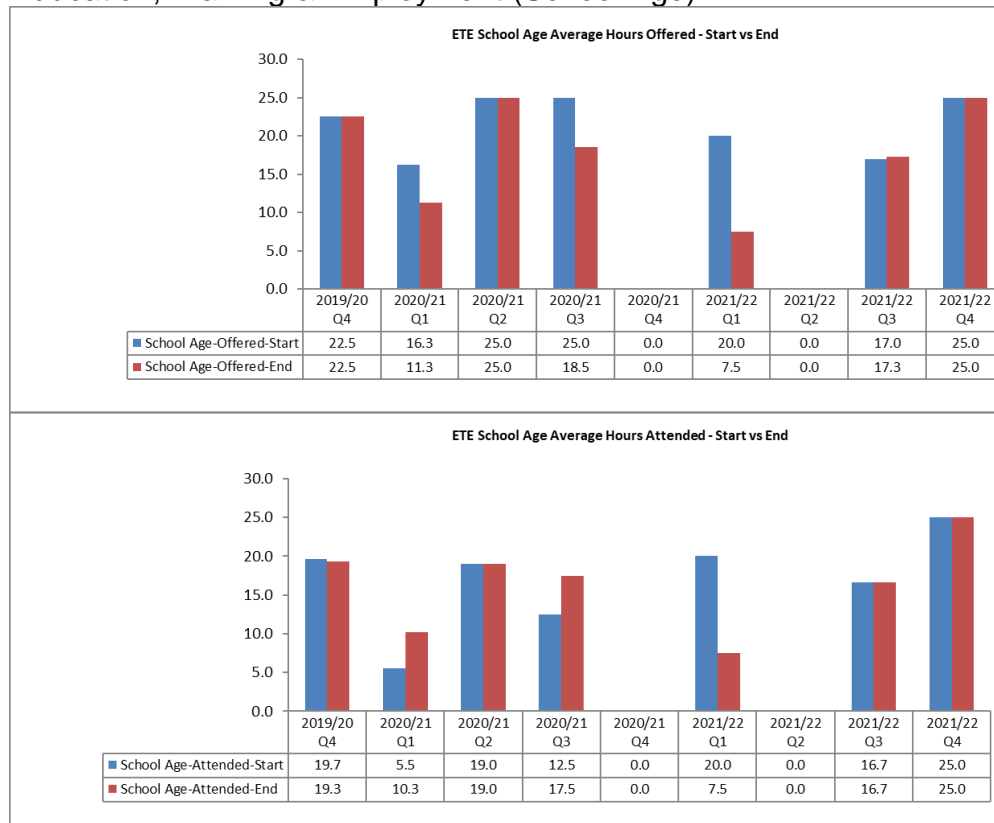
## Re-offending

The data for this indicator comes from the Police National Computer and is published by the MoJ. The 12 month reoffending rate for the July 19 – Jun 20 cohort is presented, this is the latest available data. The cohort consists of all young people who received a pre-court or court disposal or were released from custody in that date range.

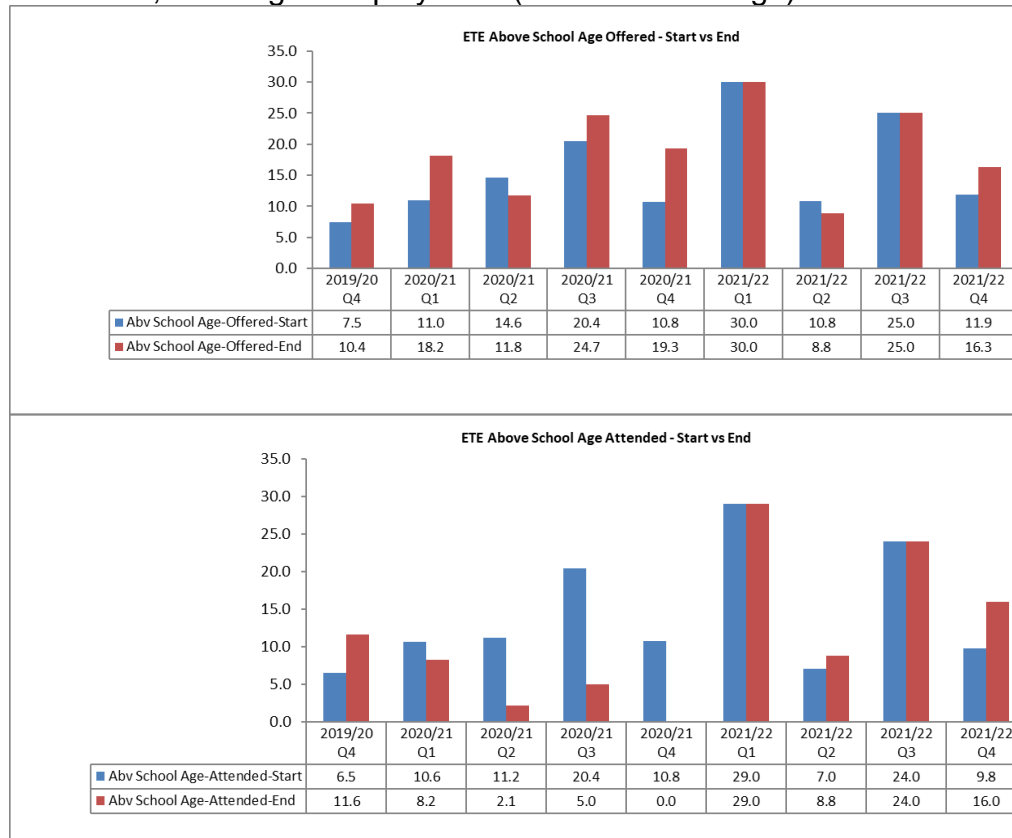


## Appendix 3 Welsh Devolved Indicators

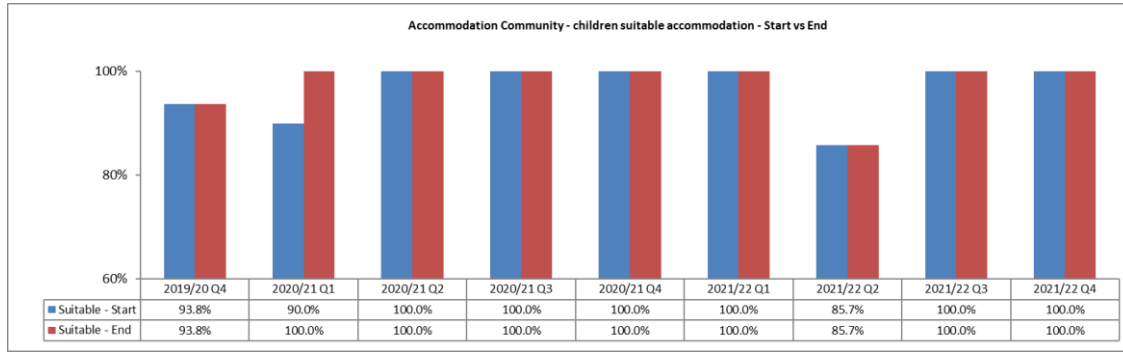
### Education, Training & Employment (School Age)



### Education, Training & Employment (Above School Age)

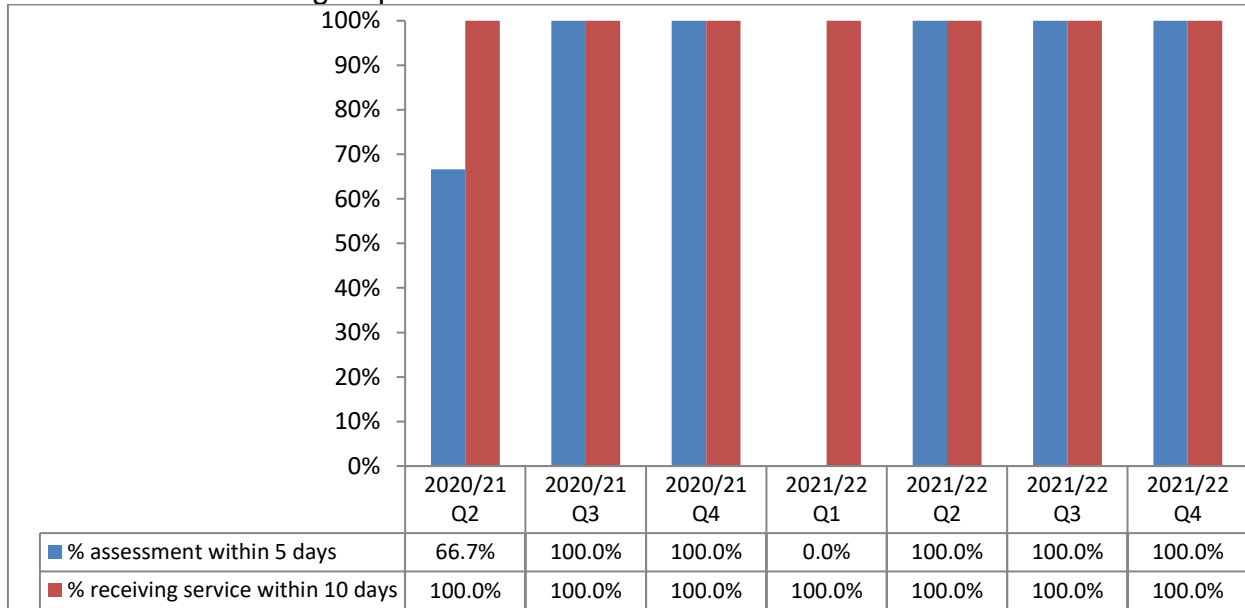


## Accommodation



## Substance Misuse

% of children receiving required service



## Mental Health

% of children receiving required services



## Appendix 4

### Cwm Taff Youth Offending Service Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Analysis as 1st July 2022

(Please note the information contained in this report has been sourced from Capita)

#### Number of children ETE are currently supporting or monitoring

RCT	160
Merthy	40

#### RCT Data

Attendance	Number of Children (NOC)	Percentage
Red (0% to 29% attendance)	20	12.5%
Amber (30% to 69% attendance)	26	16.25%
Green (70% +)	100	62.5%
AWD (no data available at time of report)	14	8.75%

#### Children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

	NOC	Percentage
ALN recorded	92	57.5
No ALN recorded	54	33.75
AWD	14	8.75

	NOC	Percentage
ALN with provision recorded (SA, SA+ or Statemented)	42	45.65%
ALN with no provision recorded (SA, SA+ or Statemented)	50	54.35%

#### Children Home Educated

NOC	Percentage
6	3.75%

#### Exclusions

	NOC	Percentage
Children with exclusions and no provision provided	71	44.38%
Permanently excluded children	5	3.13%

	NOC	Percentage
Children with reduced timetables	15	9.38%

## Merthyr Data

### Attendance

	Number of Children (NOC)	Percentage
Red (0% to 29% attendance)	6	15%
Amber (30% to 69% attendance)	7	17.5%
Green (70% +)	26	65%
AWD (no data available at time of report)	1	2.5%

### Children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

	NOC	Percentage
ALN recorded	37	92.5%
No ALN recorded	3	7.5%

	NOC	Percentage
ALN with provision recorded (SA, SA+ or Statemented)	25	67.57%
ALN with no provision recorded (SA, SA+ or Statemented)	12	32.43%

### Children Home Educated

0

### Exclusions

	NOC	Percentage
Children with exclusions and no provision provided	25	62.5%
Permanently excluded children	0	

	NOC	Percentage
Children with reduced timetable	3	7.5%

## Appendix 5 Cwm Taf YOS Budget

Individual Contributions	2022/23
YJ Effective Practice Grant	£736,657
Merthyr Tydfil (Local Authority)	£309,682
Rhondda Cynon Taf (Local Authority)	£929,048
Police	£184,593
Probation	£50,135
Health	£101,103
PCC	£99,300
PPEYP	£426,000
Families First / Cymorth	£90,790
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,927,308</b>

<b>Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service</b>									
<b>Projected Planned Expenditure for 2022/23</b>									
	Youth Justice Grant	Local Authority	Police	Probation	Health	WG	PCC	Other	
Expected Income	670,611	1,238,730	184,593	50,135	101,103	426,000	99,300	90,790	
<b>Projected Expenditure</b>									
<b>Staffing</b>									
Salaries, wages & other staffing costs	636,657	1,168,730	164,493	45,135	101,103	362,000	38,300	90,790	
3rd Party Service Provider							61,000		
<b>Running Costs - including but not limited to :-</b>									
Client Related & Activity Costs	100,000	70,000	20,100	5,000		64,000			
Premises & Accommodation									
Resources & Equipment									
IT									
Stationary									
Telephones & Mobiles									
Training									
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>736,657</b>	<b>1,238,730</b>	<b>184,593</b>	<b>50,135</b>	<b>101,103</b>	<b>426,000</b>	<b>99,300</b>	<b>90,790</b>	<b>2,927,308</b>

## Appendix 6 Youth Outreach Work

In partnership with police colleagues, outreach work continues during the evenings and weekends. Some of this work is captured below;

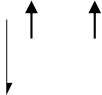
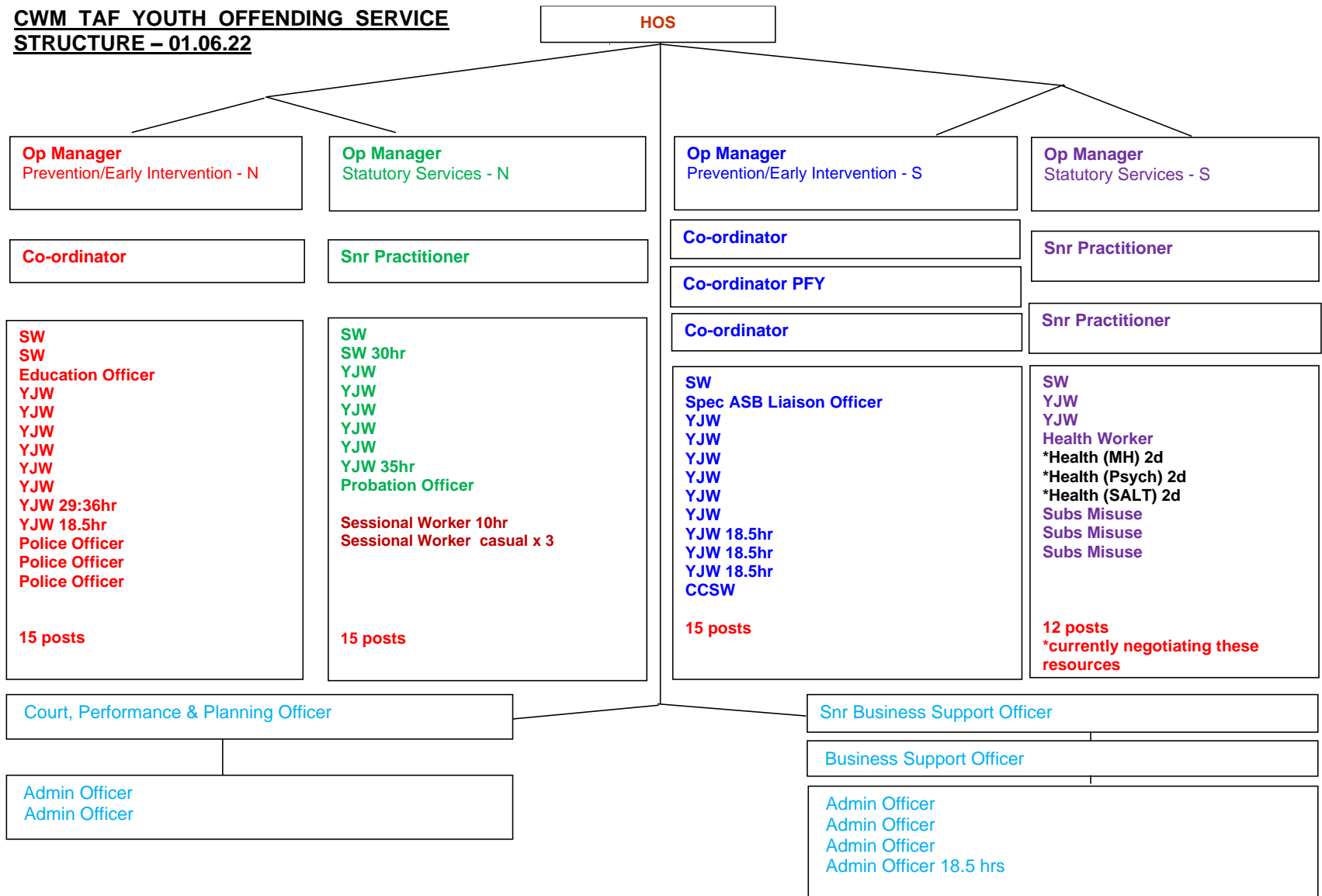
- **YOS 17/06/22** – 6 Anti Social Behaviour referrals (ASBs).
- Rhondda – large groups of youths (200 plus) gathered in Treorchy playing fields on the last school day for year 11 pupils. Four ASB's were administered relating to alcohol with parents contacted. Other police units were called to the area to assist, and one arrest of public order took place.
- Cynon – 2 ASB for youths riding bikes into ASDA's in Aberdare and intimidating customers. One youth (known to YOS) taken home, with parents and store staff spoken to.
- Significant engagement with youths in Mountain ash and Aberdare skate park.

### **YOS 24/06/22** (Heavy rain) – 4 ASB's

- Rhondda/Taff – Forty plus youths engaged with in Tonypanydy McDonald's, also youths in Porth, Rhiwgarn, and Tonyrefail areas.
- Merthyr Tydfil – staff engaged with groups in Rhydycar, Town centre and Treharris areas. Four ASB's administered for youths in site of Old Tydfils hospital (1 known to YOS).
- Team 1 – Merthyr Tydfil - ASB operation.
- Large groups engaged with in Rhydycar, Gurnos and town centre
- Intelligence submitted for drug issues in the old tax office.
- Team 2 - Cynon
- Fifty plus youths engaged in Mountain Ash town centre.
- Thirty plus in Cwmbach All Stars park – Two ASB alcohol referrals.
- Twenty plus youths engaged with in Ynys Aberdare – CCTV reported intoxicated female (15). Parents contacted to collect.
- Two ASB alcohol referrals and 2 C1 safeguarding referrals.
- Call to police regarding intoxicated youths at party in Navigation pub, Abercynon. Two ASB referrals. RCT licensing informed.

# Appendix 7 – YOS Staff Structure

## CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE STRUCTURE – 01.06.22







## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023

#### CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE 'ALL WALES PROTOCOL FOR REDUCING THE CRIMINALISATION OF CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2022'.

#### REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

**Author:** Lyndon Lewis, Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service  
Tel: 01443 827300 / 01685 724960

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Corporate Parenting Board about the 'All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children and Young People 2022'.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the publication of this report.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in due course in order to be updated on local/regional data and how progress and improvements made contributes to better outcomes for care experienced children.

#### 3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 This protocol is intended to help professionals who come into contact with care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, and in sharing a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and which safeguards and promotes their well being.
- 3.2 In January 2021, a task and finish group for reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young people in Wales (as part of a wider ministerial

Advisory Group for improving outcomes for children) requested knowledge and data on the current number of Children Looked After (CLA) within the Youth Justice system. It was agreed that a snapshot for the Wales Youth Justice caseload would be taken on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021, and a selected group from the Task and Finish Group members would interrogate the findings and report back to the group.

A short video presentation that explains the tool kit more fully can be found on this site: <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/reducing-the-criminalisation-of-care-experienced-children-and-young-adults-in-wales-a-practical-toolkit-for-professionals#section-4>

- 3.3 To provide some context in terms of the number of offences recorded annually across Wales (provided by the Youth Data Service), over the past 5 years, overall figures are decreasing. The number of out of court disposals are increasing, therefore diverting children and young people from formal sanctions, and a criminal record. This is a positive trend which aligns with policy direction and the drive to reduce the criminalisation of children and young people wherever appropriate.

Year	Youth Offences
2020/21	1776
2019/20	2369
2019/19	2650
2017/18	2709
2016/17	3341

#### 4. **APPROACH**

- 4.1 A Steering Group was set up and a Terms of Reference created to take the work forward. The work strands comprised of;
- The establishment of biannual data collections by Youth Offending Services in Wales. To provide Wales specific trend data on care experienced children and young people involved with the Youth Justice and Criminal Justice System in Wales. Also to capture data on Welsh children and young people who may be placed in England.
  - The development of a toolkit for the care workforce and supporting multi agency partners, to support use of consistent good quality evidence-based practice.
  - The awareness raising and implementation of the National Protocol (*due to be published Spring 2022*) subject to further direction from the Welsh Government.
- 4.2 A report suggested improvements for subsequent data collections to strengthen the depth of data available and information provided. Data collection from Youth Justice Services has taken place on a frequent basis and two more data lifts are anticipated during 2023. Supported by YOT Managers Cymru, the exercise was

led by the 4Cs Team, with support and guidance from the Steering Group members. A number of collaborative events were held with various stakeholders including children and young people, which contributed to the production of a Toolkit, training and resources for professionals (refer to link below).

- 4.3 Cwm Taf YOS has been proactive in developing a child first approach which treats children as children and seeks to ensure that they are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerability or the challenges they face. The YOS has a Child First ‘champion’ within the team who has led on the implementation of a Child First Strategy with accompanied guidance for staff, and this very much reflects the central approach and guiding principles set out in the Youth Justice Board’s (YJB) Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024.


4.4 **Data for RCT Children Looked After**

A recent exercise was carried out for the Youth Justice Board, looking at children receiving an Out of Court Disposal or a Community Order from court. 15% of the total were children looked after (CLA). A snapshot between April 2021 – March 2022, showed 13% of ‘children looked after’ were subject to an Out of Court Disposal and 27% for the smaller cohort received a court order.


These figures are produced on a quarterly basis and the figures of Child Looked After (CLA) vary between 10% and 15%.

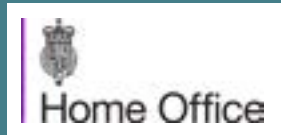
5. **CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 This protocol has been shared with the Offender Management Board, colleagues in Children’s Services, and all relevant partners. Future training regarding the protocol and use of the accompanying toolkit should be delivered on a multi-agency basis.
- 5.2 The YOS will continue to monitor and analyse data on an annual basis, recognizing that trends and challenges will change overtime. As such, a YOS diversity panel will aim to develop child friendly resources that will further assist practitioners to obtain accurate data in relation to the child’s experience/identification and to monitor disproportionality. This is outlined in the current Cwm Taf YOS Child First action plan which is one of the priorities set out in the main plan for 2022/23.

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document (s)	Date	Document Location
All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children in Wales.	June 2022	 all-wales-protocol-re ducing-the-criminalisa



Toolkit	December 2022	 Flyer - Launch of toolkit.docx
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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# All Wales Protocol

## Reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults

Expectations for practice across agencies to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of care experienced children (up to the age of 18) and young adults (up to the age of 25)

## Introduction

1. The term 'child' here is used to refer to a person up to the age of 18 years old. The term 'young adults' is used here to refer to a person who is aged 18 to 25 years old.
2. We recognise that teenagers may not like being referred to as children and will prefer the term young person. The use of the term 'child' in this guidance does not mean that practitioners should use the term in practice with everyone under 18.
3. The protocol is aimed at a range of organisations including, local authority children's services, care providers (fostering services, children's homes and other provision), police forces, Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Probation Services, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), local Youth Justice Judiciary, HM Prison and Probation Service and local health services including mental health. This is not an exhaustive list and all services that work with care experienced children, young people and young adults in some way, including the third sector have a role to play.
4. Where a child is looked after by the state, we have a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare and to act as good corporate parents so they can each reach their full potential. These responsibilities extend for some young people (who have been in care) up to their 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday.
5. Those carrying out functions under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 also have a duty to pay due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC). Every child is entitled to rights under the UNCRC without discrimination. When children are in care the question we must ask is, '*Would this be good enough for my child?*'
6. Coming into contact with the criminal justice system is related to an increased likelihood of future offending and there is a shared duty of care to divert children and young people from the criminal justice system, wherever possible, including those who are care experienced.
7. The majority of children who enter care, do so due to abuse and neglect, and will experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and trauma; this has an impact on their emotional and behavioural development. This can result in behaviour that is perceived as challenging.
8. ACEs have been identified as a key risk factor for offending and victimisation, respectively.<sup>1</sup> Child Criminal Exploitation by nature involves children in offending behaviour. There is also a link between risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and involvement in the youth offending system, especially for boys.<sup>2</sup>

9. We have already made significant strides in reducing the criminalisation of children. Since December 2009, the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in England and Wales has dropped by 84%. This is a credit to all of the agencies and practitioners involved.
10. However, although the vast majority of children who are care experienced do not get involved with the justice system, on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 a snap shot of Welsh Youth Offending Team caseloads evidenced that 21% were in care or were care leavers.<sup>3</sup> This includes prevention activity to stop potential criminal behaviour. Data for 18 – 25year olds who are care experienced is not consistently available across Wales at this time.
11. The David Lammy MP and Charlie Taylor reviews<sup>4</sup>, highlight particular disadvantages faced by Black Asian and Minority Ethnic care experienced children, young people and young adults, who find themselves over-represented in both the care and criminal justice systems.
12. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out requirements to ensure local services are provided to prevent children from offending and to promote their future welfare.
13. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 also sets out requirements for the care and support of children in care and care leavers.<sup>5</sup> . The overall purpose of Part 6 of the Act is to safeguard and promote the well-being of children in care and accommodated and care leavers. . It also aims to promote resilience and achievement of personal well-being outcomes.
14. The Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales<sup>6</sup> sets out the Welsh Government and Ministry of Justice shared vision for youth justice in Wales. It takes a ‘children first’ approach to youth justice, to ensure that it is child-centred rather than service focused, ensure that it meets the individual needs of children and is trauma informed and responds to their best interests. Across Wales a national approach to diversion and early intervention has taken place through the Bureaus operating in most Youth Offending Team (YOT) areas.
15. The Welsh Government funds the ACEs Support Hub<sup>7</sup> that continues to play a central role in developing public services in Wales which are not only ‘ACE aware’ but also trauma informed, linking with the work of Traumatic Stress Wales.
16. Early Action Together is a programme designed to take a public health approach to policing vulnerability across Wales using an ACE lens and being trauma informed. The Early Action Together ACEs learning network provides helpful information for the public, practitioners and Police about the Early Action Together programme and its work in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The aim is to share useful information and research about ACEs as well as best practice and resources. [RSPH | Welcome to the Early Action Together ACEs learning network](#) This Early Action Together

ACEs learning network has been developed by Public Health Wales, all four police forces in Wales and key partner organisations across the UK.

17. Traumatic Stress Wales<sup>8</sup> is funded by Welsh Government and aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages living in Wales at risk of developing or with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). Traumatic Stress Wales is a national initiative that works through a network of easily accessible, locally based services centred around the people they are trying to help with streamlined care pathways to avoid unnecessary repeated referral and assessment. The initiative covers children, young people and adults, and is co-produced, co-owned and co-delivered by all relevant stakeholders, including people with lived experience of PTSD and CPTSD.
18. The Welsh Government Programme for Government 2021- 2026<sup>9</sup> sets out our ambitions for and commitments to work to support children, young people and people who face the greatest challenges. This includes specific commitments towards children looked after and care leavers.<sup>10</sup>
19. Taken together, existing and developing policy, arrangements to support practice and the commitments of the Programme for Wales provide a firm foundation of shared ambitions for child-centred, ACE aware, trauma informed practice that will support the aims and implementation of this Protocol.

## **Purpose of the protocol**

20. This protocol sets out best practice for avoiding the criminalisation of care experienced children (up to the age of 18) young adults (up to the age of 25) whenever possible.
21. This national protocol ('the protocol') is intended to promote practice across agencies, supported by local and regional arrangements, to help reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults.
22. The Welsh Government considers that the protocol should assist those who come into contact with care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, in sharing a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and human rights.
23. The protocol is a framework for good practice for those working with care experienced children up to the age of 18 and young adults up to the age of 25. It aims to avoid their prosecution wherever possible and appropriate, by encouraging a response to incidents which reduces the likelihood of criminalisation, offending or reoffending through promoting:
  - Practice that is ACE aware and trauma informed and is underpinned by an understanding of impact of childhood experiences on neuro-



development and presenting behaviour;

- Child-centred practice with a focus on what matters to the child ; listening to children’s views and taking their opinions into account in developing policy and in the way we practice;
- Practice that recognises in line with the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and [All Wales Practice Guides](#) that Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a safeguarding issue. Children who are abused through CCE should be considered as children first and their care and support needs should be considered in the same way as for any child. Child Criminal Exploitation including County Lines can and does cause significant harm to children.
- Practice that is underpinned by an understanding of the interrelated nature of safeguarding issues such as going missing, Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Harmful Sexual Behaviour and trafficking. While at the same time understands the need for a consistent child-centred response based on individual needs in line with the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and [All Wales Practice Guides](#) and multi-agency statutory guidance<sup>11</sup>. All of which take a children first approach to prevent the criminalisation of children whenever possible.
- Practice that recognises that foster carers and residential placement carers are a key part of the team<sup>12</sup> in understanding the individual needs of children, the approach that a child or young person is most likely to be responsive to and in working with agencies to plan for the care and support of children and young people.
- Early intervention, diversionary practice and a restorative approach to create environments founded on relationships, respect, inclusivity, fairness and tolerance.

24. A strong corporate parenting ethos recognises the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also about prevention, promoting recovery, resilience and wellbeing. This requires corporate parents to ensure that work across social care, placement providers, educational settings, health services, the police and other criminal justice partners, prevents unnecessary criminalisation.

25. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking and migrant children who are care experienced are especially vulnerable should they go missing from their care placement. Not only are they at risk of being exploited and harmed, they are also often at heightened risk of being coerced into crime, including being radicalised. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child gives special protections which Wales has adopted. The Welsh Government has published advice on support for and the entitlements of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, [Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: guidance](#)

[for professionals | GOV.WALES](#) and an [Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: age assessment toolkit | GOV.WALES](#)

26. Supervision, reflective practice and a consistent response to care experienced children and young adults across agencies should consider the question “*Would such behaviour lead to an arrest if they had been living with their family*”?

## **Implementation**

27. The Welsh Government expects agencies and relevant partnerships to consider the ways in which the approach set out in this protocol can best be implemented in a way that impacts on practice, prevents criminalisation whenever possible and has a positive impact on outcomes for care experienced children, young people and young adults so that they can enjoy good well-being and realise their rights.
28. The Welsh Government will work with partners to consider and agree action that can be taken at a national level to effectively support the implementation of this protocol.

## **1. Promoting rights and giving children and young people a voice**

29. In exercising their functions relating to children in care and accommodated, local authorities have overarching duties to have due regard to Part 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as set out in section 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
30. A person exercising any functions under Part 6<sup>13</sup> of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 must have regard to the overarching duties set out in section 6 of the Act. This means that anybody exercising functions in relation to a child in care or accommodated, or in relation to those leaving or who have left care must:
- ascertain and have regard to the child or young person's views, wishes and feelings, so far as is reasonably practicable;
  - have regard to the importance of promoting and respecting the child or young person's dignity;
  - have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs of the child or young person (including, for example, language;)
  - have regard to the importance of providing appropriate support to enable the child or young person to participate in decisions that affect them (to the extent to which this is appropriate in the circumstances, particularly where the child or young person's ability to communicate is limited for any reason).
31. A child centred approach to policing aims to prevent any unnecessary criminalisation of children (persons under the age of 18) and prevent future offending, this includes giving children and young people a voice. The NCPP [National Strategy for Policing Children and Young People \(safe4me.co.uk\)](http://safe4me.co.uk) sets out that all children should be treated as children first in every encounter.<sup>14</sup>
32. The Children's Commissioner for Wales has produced a framework for working with children, grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: [The Right Way - A Children's Rights Approach - Children's Commissioner for Wales \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](http://childcomwales.org.uk) and [A Children's Rights Approach for Social Care in Wales - Children's Commissioner for Wales \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](http://childcomwales.org.uk)
33. Listening to, learning from, and acting on children and young peoples' voice is vital for effective policies and practice. The Welsh Government expects partners to seek care experienced children and young adults' contribution to the implementation of local arrangements for delivering this protocol. This includes seeking their views on the planned development or commissioning of services to support the aims of this protocol on a local or regional basis.

34. Children are entitled to an active offer of advocacy<sup>15</sup> from a statutory Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) when they become looked after or become subject of child protection enquiries leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference. The 'active offer' is made directly to the child by the Advocacy Service. An 'active offer' is a sharing of information about the statutory right and entitlement of a child in particular circumstances to access support from an Independent Professional Advocacy Service. Information must be shared with them that includes an explanation about the role of Independent Professional Advocacy.
35. Guidance on Regulation 29 of *Statutory Guidance For service providers and responsible individuals on meeting service standard regulations for Care home services , Domiciliary support services, Secure accommodation services, and Residential family centre services*<sup>16</sup> sets out that as part of their induction, staff receive behavioural support training that is relevant to their role to make sure any control or restraint practices are only used proactively and when absolutely necessary, in line with current national guidance. Current national guidance sets out expectations for child/person-centred planning and positive behaviour approach to reduce the use of restrictive practices<sup>17</sup> in line with human rights. This approach will also contribute to a reduction in the incidents that can lead to the criminalisation of children and young people.
36. The regulation guidance also requires that service providers ensure a positive and constructive approach is adopted to support an individual's behaviour. Any strategies or measures taken to support the individual's behaviour are consistent with meeting the individual's needs for care and support; the well-being of other individuals for whom care and support is provided.
37. Guidance on Regulation 22 of *Statutory Guidance Fostering Services This statutory guidance relates to Parts 2 to 16 of The Regulated Fostering Services (Services Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019*,<sup>18</sup> contains similar advice. That service providers ensure arrangements are in place so that whenever foster parents are using forms of control or restrain:
- providers are able to check that it, is used as part of a pro-active approach to behavioural support:
  - is proportionate to the risk of harm and the seriousness of that harm to the child receiving care and support or another person
  - takes account of the assessment of the child's needs;
  - follows current legislation and guidance.

Current national guidance sets out expectations for child/person-centred planning and positive behaviour approach to reduce the use of restrictive practices<sup>19</sup> in line with human rights. This approach will also contribute to a reduction in the incidents that can lead to the criminalisation of children and young people.

38. The regulation guidance also requires Service providers ensure a positive and constructive approach is adopted by foster parents to support a child's behaviour. Any approach to support the child's behaviour is consistent with meeting the child's needs for care and support and the wellbeing of other members of the foster parent's household who may be affected by the placement made.

## **2. What this means for practice**

39. Many care experienced children, young people and young adults will have experienced trauma and/or abuse before coming into care. Those young people abused through harm such as child sexual exploitation (CSE) or child criminal exploitation (CCE) experience the added trauma of emotional, psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse. They will have experienced multiple abuses and breaches of trust.

40. These experiences can impact on the ways in which children and young people act and engage with others. The fact that children may be perceived as uncooperative, aggressive, and unwilling to engage<sup>20</sup> and as 'risk taking' can mean that they are, misunderstood and negatively perceived by practitioners. Engaging in behaviors seen by adults as 'risky' can often be understood by children as a way to cope and assert some control.<sup>21</sup> Children participating in a Welsh Government commissioned consultation<sup>22</sup> talked about practitioners sometimes judging them, blaming them or 'branding' them.

41. The ways in which we respond to care experienced children and young adults needs to be informed by an understanding of the full context of their life. Getting to a position of trust with a child who has been shaped by a history of being let down or hurt by adults' demands and deserves the time to develop a relationship with the child.

42. Welsh Government legislation and policy seeks to promote a rights-based approach to practice with children and adults. This means involving them in decisions about the support and services they receive and the outcomes they want to achieve. It also means planning to meet needs in a child and person centred way that promotes wellbeing and the opportunities for individuals to realise their rights.

43. One of the implications of this for practice is the need to plan with, and for, children and adults so that measures are in place to prevent situations arising where they behave in way that people find challenging and that escalate into situations where property is damaged or there is a risk of harm to the individual or others. Information from significant people in the individual's life can help to inform care and support planning to achieve this.

44. Listening to children and young people and finding out what matters to them should be part of a child-centred planning to help make them feel secure and reduce the likelihood of them going missing and/or being put at risk of abuse and exploitation.
45. The approach to involving children and the significant people in their lives in planning for care and support should be meaningful and appropriate to the age, capacity and communication needs of the individual. This means providing additional support for some children through an advocate<sup>23</sup> to ensure that their views are heard. Part of a discussion with a child about their care and support plan should include sharing with them information about the intentions set out in this All Wales Protocol and the commitment to avoid criminalisation whenever possible.
46. There is evidence that an over-reliance on specialist risk assessment tools does not always support child-centred practice and may detract from professional judgement.<sup>24</sup> Where used, risk assessment tools should only inform a wider assessment of care and support needs. The process should not result in meetings where the focus is on the risk assessment and reducing a risk score without considering wider care and support planning to sustain change and support well-being in a child centred way.
47. Restrictive practices such as restraint or seclusion should only ever be used as a last resort to prevent harm to the individual or others, in line with expectations set out in the [Reducing restrictive practices framework 2021 | GOV.WALES](#). The advice on child and person centred planning and positive behaviour approaches set out in the Framework will support practice which will also reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring which could lead to the child or young person coming into contact with the police.
48. Wherever possible if an incident occurs, children should be given time to calm down, if they are not calm, to talk in the presence of a known and trusted practitioner or in private if they prefer, when they share their account of what has happened. The child should be given the choice about who is present when they give their account of the incident, wherever this is practical and possible. This can be an important opportunity to understand the child or young person's perspective - both to inform decision making about how to respond in their best interests and to avoid criminalisation wherever possible.
49. Seeking children's views after an incident, including where they have come into contact with criminal justice agencies, is an important part of reviewing decisions about their care and support in order to reduce the likelihood of future incidents. This discussion should wherever possible take place without the presence of others involved in the incident.
50. Proactive strategies can include environmental changes, to make the environment more suitable for the child or young person and teaching new skills or behaviours, so that behaviours that challenge become less likely.

51. Reactive strategies might include distraction, de-escalation, active listening, or withdrawal. These strategies can form a useful part of the proactive approach to inform care and support planning to reduce the likelihood of incidents that may lead to the police being called or to children and young people going missing where they will be at risk.
52. Consultation with children and young people<sup>25</sup> who are care experienced identified that the police should be regular visitors to placements – not just attending when something has gone wrong, but there to build relationships with them and to understand each other better.

[Check Your Thinking – Resources to support safeguarding practice with young people, for use by all those working with and caring for young people.](#)

**Resources and materials have been developed from research and partnership work with children young people, foster carers, and social care and allied professionals.** They are designed for use by all those working with and caring for young people. They share messages from young people with experiences of exploitation and harm, about how they experience support. The messages are also from those working with and caring for children and young people, about support needed and some of the challenges involved in keeping them safe. All the resources are designed as reflective tools to help you 'check your thinking' about key issues in safeguarding children and young people from exploitation, harms and other abuses, such as: assessing and managing risk, responding to children and young people, multi-agency practice, the importance of language and child-centred approaches.

### **3. Responding to incidents**

53. Sometimes incidents occur because practitioners put in places rules and sanctions with the intention of keeping children safe and managing risks. Children may react to the enforcement of these rules and sanctions in a way that escalates situations so that their behaviour challenges others or where a response to 'risky' behaviour results in a call to the police.
54. When responding to an incident every practitioner should ensure that they ask the child for their own account of what has happened. There may be a situation where immediate action is necessary to ensure the safety of the child or others.
55. As part of all children's care and support plans there should be rigorous assessments and plans in place to respond to individual children's behaviour. Effective de-escalation requires practitioners to make rapid and structured assessments of the immediate and foreseeable risks, considering care planning, risk assessment and positive behaviour support planning for the individual child.
56. When incidents arise at the place where the child lives, carers should attempt to manage them in a way informed by information in the individual's care and support plan, through application of the positive behaviour policy and through internal resolutions such as restorative approaches, without police involvement wherever possible and appropriate.
57. Carers need to consider the nature and seriousness of the incident before deciding how to respond and whether to involve the police. This should be in line with positive behaviour policies within the setting. Positive behaviour policies should include a cooling off period allowing all parties time to reflect, unless the incident is so serious that more immediate action is required.
58. The police should not be used for behaviour management or matters a reasonable parent would not have called the police over. Consideration should always be given to whether the police would be called if the incident had occurred in a domestic setting. Positive behavioural support policies and training for carers and staff on how to apply them will contribute to a reduction in incidents where children behave in a way that challenges others.
59. Responding to an immediate offence/situation should involve efforts to understand the full circumstances of the incident and to identify whether the child or young person may be a victim. Efforts to gain a full understanding of the situation should wherever possible be undertaken in a place where the child or young adult feels safe and supported.<sup>26</sup>



60. There is an expectation that local authority officers, residential care workers or foster parents plan with and for care experienced children and young people in a child-centred way that meets their needs and minimises the risk of incidents arising. When incidents do arise, carers should strive to manage them at the placement through internal resolutions such as restorative approaches.
61. Where this is not possible due to the severity of the situation, or where there is concern about immediate safety, police should consider use of discretionary powers to apply an informal resolution response (such as a community resolution). It is good practice for such procedures to include a cooling-off period and sufficient time for decisions to be informed by the advice of key professionals (e.g. registered manager and key worker, foster parents, social worker or police link workers for residential settings).
62. Understanding the potential for a child to have their details retained on police databases, which remain searchable and potentially may be disclosed into adulthood, should allow those caring for children and to make an informed judgement about involving the police. It is important for all agencies and those caring for children to be clear about how they will decide to respond to an incident and whether any other alternatives should be considered e.g. a restorative meeting.

#### **4. Care experienced young adults (aged 18 or over)**

63. [Part 6 Code of Practice \(Looked after and accommodated children\) \(gov.wales\)](http://gov.wales) under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) sets out Support for children aged 16-17 who are still being looked after (a 'category 1 young person'). This describes a comprehensive framework of assessment, care and support planning, intervention and case review by local authorities to prepare 16 and 17 year olds for the time when they will no longer be looked after.
64. When a child in care is about to turn 16, the local authority must prepare a pathway plan. This plan will capture the actions required from the local authority, the child's carer, the child, birth family and other identified parties to assist the child to make a successful transition from care into adulthood. The pathway plan will build upon the child's existing Part 6 Care and Support Plan, which will be subsumed within the pathway plan.
65. The Part 6 Code of Practice also sets out duties on local authorities to provide support for those children and young adults who have ceased to be looked after. These include care leavers under the age of 18 (referred to in the Act as a 'category 2 young person'), care leavers aged 18 and over (a 'category 3 young person'), and care leavers who reconnect to care at 21 for education and training (a 'category 4 young person'). It also deals with young people who left care under a Special Guardianship Order (a 'category 5 young person'), and other former looked after or accommodated children who may be entitled to advice and support (a 'category 6 young person').
66. The Part 6 code sets out a local authority's legal responsibilities in respect of post-18 living arrangements for young adults in foster care. Local authorities are required to set up local 'When I am Ready' schemes in line with the requirements in the code. 'When I am Ready'<sup>27</sup> arrangement is the term used in Wales for an arrangement whereby a young adult in foster care remains with their former foster carer beyond the age of 18.
67. However, many young adults who are care experienced still have to make accelerated transitions into independence. Many young adults also have to negotiate adulthood while coping with the continued impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma. This will be different for every individual but there is clear evidence that for some, these childhood experiences can present additional challenges to enjoying well-being into adulthood.<sup>28</sup>
68. That is why legislation and the Code of Practice set out duties on local authorities to plan with them for when they leave care and to provide support as they grow into young adults. Once a child ceases to be looked after, if they are a "relevant child", or a "former relevant child", the local authority must appoint a Personal Advisor (PA) to support them up to the age of 21, and up to 25 if requested. They act as the focal point to ensure

that care leavers are provided with the right kind of personal support.

69. Services provided by Local Authorities for young adults who are care experienced should develop and maintain constructive working relationships with local criminal justice services to help personal advisers and other partners, make the right links to support these young adults, including the use of pathway planning to divert them from offending, support them if they are transferring from YOT to Probation Service supervision, support them if in custody, or supervise and assist them in the community on release from custody as part of their resettlement plan.

## **5. Police decision-making when responding to incidents involving care experienced children, young people and young adults**

70. Where it is not possible to avoid involving the police due to the severity of the situation, or where there is concern about immediate safety, police should consider use of discretionary powers to apply an informal resolution response (such as community resolution).
71. Where the police are required to record an incident as a crime but feel further action (other than safeguarding) is not in the public interest, they have the discretion to resolve the report accordingly by applying Outcome 21 from the National Police Outcomes Framework. Outcome 21 is set out as: *Further action, resulting from the crime report, which could provide evidence sufficient to support formal action being taken against the suspect is not in the public interest - Police decision*. This will therefore, not be recorded as a police sanction on the Police National computer (PNC).
72. Children (under the age of 18) should not be taken to police stations on matters that allow for an alternative approach. However, in cases where this is judged to be absolutely necessary, they should be adequately supported by their responsible local authority or care setting.
73. Police, social workers, and carers should also consider what will happen when the child is discharged from the station. The options at this time are; being released without charge / no further action; charged with an offence; released under investigation; bailed or referred to the relevant Youth Offending Team for consideration by a diversion panel.
74. There is an expectation that where a care experienced child or young adult comes into contact with the criminal justice system, their responsible local authority is contacted and has input in decision-making.
75. In circumstances where a community resolution is inappropriate, the police will refer the case to the local Youth Offending Team (10 to 17 year olds) who through multi agency decision making with the police will agree the most suitable course of action, including diversion from criminalisation/prosecution.
76. Multi agency diversion panels are designed to consider and provide informed decision-making, based on an assessment by the YOT of the child's needs to determine the most suitable outcome. The process has regard to the best interests of both children and victims of crime, with a view to protecting potentially vulnerable children and protecting the public.
77. The decision making should consider what the most appropriate disposal is for the child, what help and support they need and depending on the

type of disposal whether a restorative intervention, would be appropriate. It should take into account of the wishes of those harmed as well as seeking to address the needs of the child to reduce the risk of repeat offending.

## **6. Supporting care experienced children and young adults in the criminal justice system and reducing offending**

78. There will be instances where children and young adults who are care experienced will be charged with an offence. The home authority must ensure that the child or young person is legally represented by a solicitor with expertise in youth justice and supported whilst at the police station by an Appropriate Adult, ideally by an adult who knows them well. This should include measures to ensure that the child or young person understands what is happening to them.
79. All agencies should ensure that care experienced young adults who come in to contact with the criminal justice system are aware of their rights to legal representation and/or advocacy support.
80. Local authorities should explain to children in care and care leavers what they should do and say if they come into contact with the police or criminal justice agencies. This will allow support services, including their Personal Advisor, to be notified and involved in decision-making and case resolution.
81. Where they consent to their notification, police and criminal justice agencies should seek and encourage the involvement of the care leaver's former responsible authority and / or their support network in decision-making. This is regardless of whether their contact with police occurs inside or outside that authority.
82. All agencies should ensure that care experienced young adults who come in to contact with the criminal justice system are aware of their rights to legal representation and/or advocacy support.
83. Children should not be held at the police station for longer than is necessary because support and/or accommodation isn't available.
84. All local agencies/protocol partners should sign up, and adhere, to the *All-Wales guidance for the appropriate management and transfer of children and young people by the Police and Local Authorities Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984*<sup>29</sup> and seek to avoid holding care experienced children and young people overnight in police cells wherever possible.
85. It is important that they are not disadvantaged because of their care/former care status, when the decision is made about whether to grant bail or not. Consideration is also likely to be given to whether they can return to their place of residence depending on the nature of offence committed.

86. If the police are proposing to deny bail, every effort should be made to identify whether bail supervision and support could be provided to prevent this occurring and to find alternative accommodation if it is required. The Police have a duty to make the request to the local authority and the local authority to consider it.
87. Where the child, young person or young adult does not admit to an offence, or where the offence is serious enough to merit considering prosecution, individual circumstances and those of the offence should be carefully considered when deciding if charging and prosecution is appropriate.<sup>21</sup>.
88. Although only applying to offences committed in children's homes, the [Crown Prosecution Service Guidance on Youth Offenders](#) section on Behaviour in Children's Homes provides a useful way of looking at aggravating and mitigating factors when deciding whether prosecution of care experienced children is appropriate regardless of the child's type of placement.
89. Any decision to charge and prosecute a child or young adult should consider whether their actions are due to exploitation, human trafficking or modern slavery. If they are a victim of trafficking or modern slavery, the non-prosecution principle within the Modern Slavery Act 2015 should be considered and, if appropriate, applied. Furthermore, the local authority should be pro-active in assisting the Crown Prosecution Service in reaching informed decisions when considering cases involving care experienced children.
90. If a care experienced child or young adult receives a community sentence, their carers, social worker or personal advisor, YOT or probation case manager, should continue to work closely together, share information and clarify their roles and responsibilities to ensure that the child, young person or young adult receives the support they need.
91. If a custodial sentence is likely, the carers, YOT worker, probation officer, social worker or personal advisor should work together to prepare the child, young person or young adult, explaining what will happen and how they will be supported. The YOT worker or probation officer should request any relevant information from the social/worker/personal advisor ahead of them preparing the pre-sentence report.
92. [Guidance for the joint working arrangements between Youth Offending Teams and Local Authority Children's Services for children in custody in Wales \(November 2020\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yiresourcehub.uk\)](#) is intended to ensure that staff in YOTs and children's services work together effectively in the discharge of their specific duties towards children and young people to meet their needs and to support their reintegration and resettlement.

93. It is especially important to ensure young adults who are transitioning between YOT and probation services do not fall through the gaps. The responsibilities of agencies are outlined in the [Youth to adult transition principles and guidance for Wales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-to-adult-transition-principles-and-guidance-for-wales)
94. A Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales 2018-2023<sup>30</sup> sets out how Prison and Probation services will, in collaboration with all relevant agencies, to further reduce the number of people entering the criminal justice system and support people who have committed offences not to re-offend. The framework includes advice in relation to supporting care leavers.
95. Across Wales 18+ diversionary schemes, commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) in conjunction with Welsh Government and HMPPS are now in operation. Any adults that meet the criteria are automatically referred to the scheme upon admission of guilt.

### **Part 11 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014**

96. The [Part 11, Code of Practice \(miscellaneous and general\) | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales/government/publications/part-11-code-of-practice-miscellaneous-and-general) under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the duties placed on local authorities in respect of adults with care and support needs who are in the secure estate in Wales. This duty exists regardless of their place of ordinary residence in Wales or elsewhere before their detention, and a change in how existing responsibilities for the care and support of children in the secure estate (whether detained in England or Wales) are fulfilled.
97. The home local authority must fulfil their duties towards a child looked after during their period of detention in accordance with the requirements of Care Planning, Placement and Review of Cases (Wales) Regulations 2015 and to former looked after children on their release.
98. Local authorities must continue to fulfil their duties in relation to sections 105 – 108 of the 2014 Act (keeping in touch, personal advisers, pathway assessment and plans, pathway assessments and plans post 18 living arrangements) and these continue to apply to category 2 and to relevant category 5 and 6 young people during the period that they are detained.
99. The local authority must meet its responsibilities for adult care leavers in the secure estate, at the appropriate time. The local authority's responsibilities to care leavers are suspended where the local authority has no ability to fulfil these responsibilities during the time the child is detained but are triggered again when the individual is released. Section 185(5) excludes some of the support for care leavers aged 18 years and over that they would otherwise have been entitled to receive while they are detained in the secure estate.



100. Adult care leavers aged 18 years and over (category 3); care leavers who reconnect at 21 with education and training (category 4), young people who left care under a Special Guardianship Order (category 5), and other former looked after children who may be entitled to advice and support (category 6) are not entitled to receive some of the support which they would otherwise be entitled to receive in accordance with Part 6 of the 2014 Act during the time they are detained in the secure estate. Entitlements within sections 110,112,114 and 115 of the 2014 Act are disapplied during the period of detention.
101. Custodial establishments should nominate a named representative to act as the link with the care planning process for each child in care during their time in custody.
102. Custodial establishments should do all they can to prepare children and young people for transition back into the community and support transition arrangements. Resettlement planning should begin at the start of the remand period or sentence and be a continued focus of required planning meetings during the time in custody. Resettlement planning should include the individual's wishes and views, and arrangements tailored to their individual needs.
103. Children, young people and young adults who are care experienced should not be disadvantaged regarding early release compared with other children in custody. Early release and use of release on temporary license can encourage good behaviour and engagement with resettlement plans and, as such, should be considered where possible.

**Restorative justice** gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with the child or young person to explain the real impact of the crime (if it is appropriate) – it empowers victims by giving them a voice. It can help children and young people to learn from their mistakes and help them to take responsibility and make amends. There are various forms of direct and indirect reparation.

A restorative approach is essentially about working with individuals who have offended to help them understand their own needs and to empathise with and, therefore, understand the needs of others, allowing them to develop understanding of the impact of their actions. This can range from informal day-to-day restorative approaches related to building relationships through to more formal restorative justice conferences.

Restorative approaches seek to establish an environment where mutual regard is foremost, and to repair or resolve a harm that has been perpetrated. It is a process whereby the victim has an opportunity to be heard and to state the impact of the behaviour and the individual who has offended has the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions. Restorative approaches need to be informed by the following six principles:

**Restoration** – the primary aim of restorative practice is to address and repair harm.

**Voluntarism** – participation in restorative processes is voluntary and based on informed choice.

**Neutrality** – restorative processes are fair and unbiased towards participants.

**Safety** – processes and practice aim to ensure the safety of all participants and create a safe space for the expression of feelings and views about harm that has been caused.

**Accessibility** – restorative processes are non-discriminatory and available to all those affected by conflict and harm.

**Respect** – restorative processes are respectful of the dignity of all participants and those affected by the harm caused.

To avoid causing additional harm, professionals should consider the impact of restorative processes on the child or young person, bearing in mind their individual characteristics such as religion, culture or individual vulnerabilities and experiences. The child or young person should be given an opportunity to have their voice heard. It should not be automatically assumed that a child or young person is solely to blame for an event and they should be afforded an opportunity to put their version of events across

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<sup>1</sup> Baglivio, M; Wolf, K; Piquero, A. and Epps, N. (2015) 'The Relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and Juvenile Offending Trajectories in a Juvenile Offender Sample', *Journal of Criminal Justice Volume 43*, Issue 3, May–June 2015, Pages 229-241

<sup>2</sup> Cockbain, E; Brayley, H; Ashby, M (2014) *Not just a girl thing: A large-scale comparison of male and female users of child sexual exploitation services in the UK*. Barnardo's, London.

<sup>3</sup> Snap shot data from all Youth Justice Services across Wales on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2021.

<sup>4</sup> [Lammy Review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) [Review of the youth justice system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> [Children in local authority care: code of practice | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

<sup>6</sup> [youth-justice-blueprint 0.pdf \(gov.wales\)](http://gov.wales) [Supporting young people in the Justice system | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

<sup>7</sup> [about – Ace Aware Wales](http://aceaware.wales)

<sup>8</sup> [Home -Traumatic Stress Wales \(nhs.wales\)](http://nhs.wales)

<sup>9</sup> [Programme for government: update | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

<sup>10</sup> See Pages 4 and 10 of the Programme for Government.

<sup>11</sup> [Safeguarding children at risk of abuse or neglect | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)  
[Safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)  
[Safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

<sup>12</sup> [Fostering Wellbeing | The Fostering Network](http://thefosteringnetwork.org)

<sup>13</sup> [Children in local authority care: code of practice | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

<sup>14</sup> [CYP Chart 2018 v5 \(safe4me.co.uk\)](http://safe4me.co.uk)

<sup>15</sup> The National Approach to Statutory Advocacy (NASA), is a standardised approach to statutory advocacy services being delivered by the six Regional Social Services Collaboratives. These arrangements are set out in the [Code of Practice on Advocacy \(Part 10\)](#) under the Social services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

<sup>16</sup> [Statutory Guidance for service providers \(gov.wales\)](http://gov.wales)

<sup>17</sup> [Reducing restrictive practices framework 2021 | GOV.WALES](http://gov.wales)

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<sup>18</sup> [Statutory Guidance - Fostering Services \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Reducing restrictive practices framework 2021 | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>20</sup> Sharp-Jeffs, N; Coy, M; and Kelly, L. ,2017, *Key messages from research on child sexual exploitation: Social Workers* , Centre for Expertise on child sexual abuse, London Metropolitan University

<sup>21</sup> Hallett, S. (PI), Forrester, D., and Verbruggen, J. ,2016-18, *Keeping safe? An analysis of the outcomes of work with sexually exploited young people in Wales*. Health and Care Research Wales.

<sup>22</sup> Dynamix, (2018) *How do we measure children by what they think, and not by what their experiences are?* Welsh Government commissioned safeguarding consultation with young people.

<sup>23</sup> Advocacy can take many forms, each with the common aim of supporting individuals to have their voices heard, to clarify options and to express their views, wishes and feelings. See Annex 3.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/blog/risk-tools-risk-talk-and-relationships/>  
<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/our-research/responding-to-csa/risk-tools/>

<sup>25</sup> Consultation with children and young people, February 2021 undertaken by the 4C's.

<sup>26</sup> Sharps-Jeff, N; Coy, M. and Kelly, L. (2017) *Key messages from research on child sexual exploitation: Police*, Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse

<sup>27</sup> [when-i-am-ready-good-practice-guide-march-2016.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Adverse Childhood Experiences - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> [The management and transfer of children and young people in police custody | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales 2018-2023 \(iomcymru.org.uk\)](#)



# A new way of working

to reduce the number of care experienced children and young adults who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

We are pleased to share with you

## A practical toolkit for use by professionals

Reducing the Criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults in Wales: A Practical Toolkit for Professionals - Missing People



Please click to access toolkit

This toolkit aims to turn the principles in the [All Wales Protocol: reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults](#) into practice. We hope it will be used extensively as a resource to train and support multi agency colleagues working with care experienced children and young adults.

National Charity Missing People in partnership with Llamau and consultant Claire Sands were commissioned by the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) to develop this toolkit.

As part of this project, we consulted with over 65 children and young adults who are care experienced. Their views have shaped the content within the Toolkit and we thank them for their views.

**Please share with your colleagues to raise awareness of this valuable resource. This toolkit is available in Welsh or English. You can select your language preference via the dropdown menu to the right of the search bar.**



Claire Sands

**missing  
people**

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419)  
and in Scotland (SC047419)

**Llamau**

Imagine a World Without  
Homelessness

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023

#### FOSTERING SERVICE QUALITY OF CARE REPORT 2021/22

#### REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

Author(s): Sheryn Edwards, Service Manager

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Corporate Parenting Board members with the Annual Fostering Service Quality of Care Report.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This report provides information about the annual fostering service (2021-22) as is required.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report is compiled as required under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Regulation 52 of the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 also requires the local authority manager to put suitable arrangements in place to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of service.

4.2 The report itself is attached and highlights the achievements and developments of the Fostering Service during 2021-22.

## **10 CONCLUSION.**

10.1 Progress was made during the year in relation to carer support and consultation, foster panel development and working closely with colleagues and partners to provide quality fostering arrangements for children. Priorities for the year ahead:

### **Future Planning and Developments for the next year**

- **Ongoing Consultations to enhance understanding of foster carers, young people, and parents' experiences**
- **An up to date fostering guide available and accessible for foster carers and children**
- **Foster Carer Profiles in place for young people and social workers to improve the matching process**
- **Health and Education information collected specifically to contribute to the monitoring process**
- **Pioneer Foster Carers recruitment and support systems developed across mainstream, and kinship foster carers**
- **Parent and Child Training and development to encourage existing foster carers to transfer to this provision**
- **Foster Wales Recruitment campaign developed to recruit more foster carers locally**
- **Foster Panel training and appraisals to support the Quality Assurance role of the foster panel members**
- **Review the impact of Learning and Development Framework for foster carer training**
- **Develop quality assurance and audit work and to take forward lessons learned.**
- **Further develop systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing quality of service including the functioning of the Fostering Panel in line with The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018.**

10.2 A report covering the period 2022-23 will be provided in July 2023.





**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023**

**REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION  
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE**

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## Quality of Care Report 2021/22

This report is compiled as required under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Regulation 52 of the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 also requires the local authority manager to put suitable arrangements in place to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing, and improving the quality of service.

## Service Background

Rhondda-Cynon-Taf fostering service that is currently Hybrid/agile working) and is responsible for the recruitment, retention, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of mainstream and Kinship (family and friend) foster carers. The service is located under the leadership of the Head of Children Family Support and Accommodation, Claire Williams. The registered Care Inspectorate Wales manager for the local authority is the service manager, Sheryn Edwards.

The overall strategic and day to day management of the fostering service is the responsibility of the Service Manager for Children Looked who was appointed in November 2015, and three Fostering Team Managers. All staff are suitably experienced and qualified to operate a Fostering service.

An effective reporting structure is in place to ensure clear accountability for the service operation and includes regular management meetings, team meetings and performance data feedback to the corporate parenting Board, Senior Management Team and elected members.

To ensure that a quality service is provided the following information is monitored but for the purposes of this report only the relevant data is included:

- The numbers and range of foster carers available
- The turnover of foster carers
- The recruitment strategy and timescales for assessment and approval
- Foster Panels
- Timescales for annual reviews/medicals/DBS checks
- Number of placements and vacancies
- Educational attainment of children placed with foster carers, including the number of children excluded from school

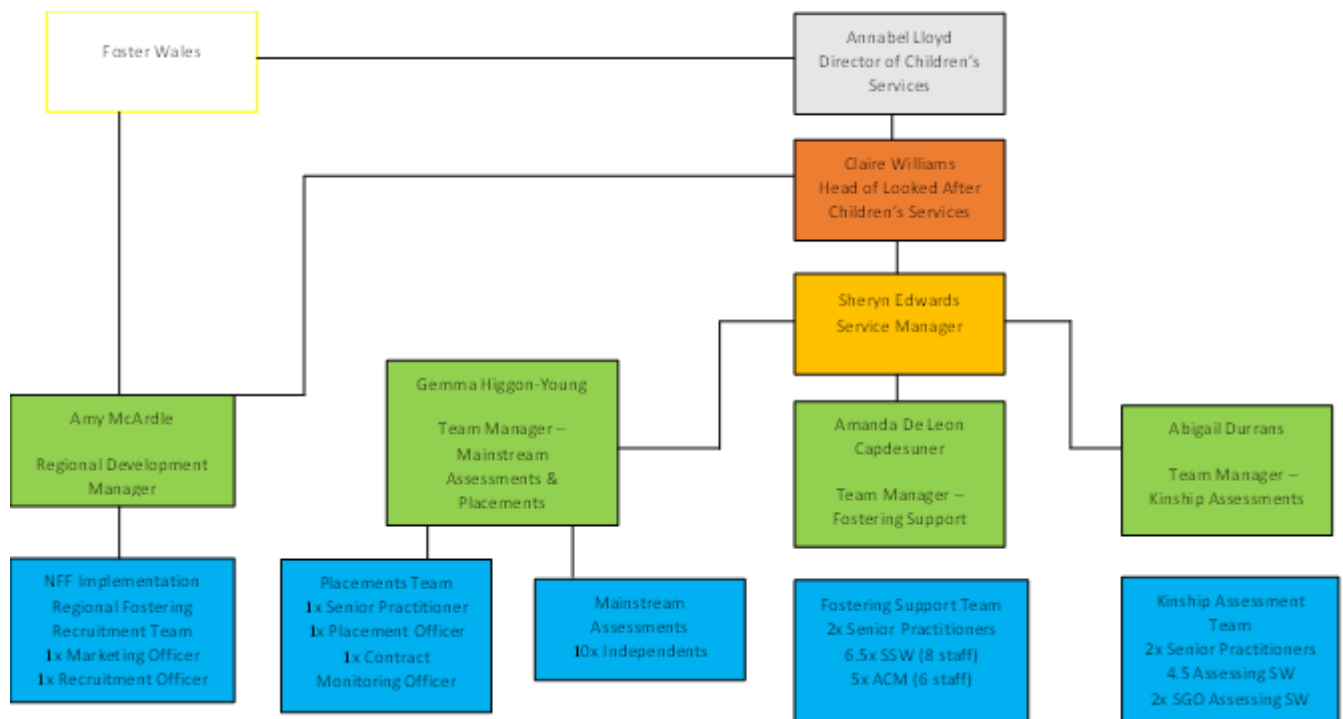
- Training of carers and staff
- Compliance with foster placement agreements
- Accidents, illnesses and injuries
- Complaints
- Allegations against foster carers
- Unauthorised absences from the foster carer home

## Staffing

The fostering service are currently configured into four teams. These include the following:

- Regional Recruitment Team- Responsibility for recruitment of mainstream foster carers.
- Placements and Assessments Team - Responsibility for assessment of mainstream carers and placement finding.
- Kinship Assessment Team- Responsibility for initial viabilities and assessment of all kinship carers and undertaking SGO assessments
- Fostering Support Team- Responsibility for fostering supervision and support for mainstream and kinship foster carers

The full-service structure is below:



All staff are suitably qualified for their roles, and all have up to date DBS checks. Social workers are registered with Social Care Wales.

Training is actively encouraged for all team members with a comprehensive annual programme available to all staff. Training is identified via supervision and at each staff member's annual appraisal.

Each of our foster carers are actively encouraged to participate in the available learning and development opportunities. This is raised through supervision and annual review between the carer and supervising social worker and logged onto their personal development record and plan.

The Purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the quality of service provided across the fostering teams and outlines areas for development during the forthcoming year. This will be detailed in the following 4 sections.

**1. People feel their voices are heard, they have choice about their care and support and opportunities are made available to them.**

**What we do well and the evidence for it, summary of arrangement in place and methods used to involve children and young people in their care and support.**

Summary of the views received from children who use the service, family members, and other professionals. Summary of how the rights of people who use the service are being met.

During this reporting period we have been able to gradually re-introduce direct, face to face sessions, to consult with foster carers and children on a more regular basis as the pandemic restrictions have reduced.

The face-to-face consultation sessions have taken the form of workshops and coffee mornings, coupled with the continued online sessions, have provided varied opportunities that assist carers to express their feelings and views on the ways in which the service could improve and their views and experiences. The main areas raised by foster carers are

- Activities for children
- Fees and Allowances
- Training opportunities
- Flexible support

Our activity reporting has coincided with a programme of events from Welsh Government Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing funding streams that RCT fostering were successful in their applications. As a result, an array of trips and activities were organised during the spring summer and winter months, including bowling, cinema trips, picnics, children's parties, and fostering day's out. Our pioneer foster carers took the lead in organising events and this proved so successful that they have recently organised the annual award giving appreciation lunch and the Christmas party for children in foster care both were a resounding success.

Included in this involvement work is the following contributions and feedback from foster carers and young people and other professionals:

- Foster carers have reported they feel more comfortable and relaxed when attending foster panel and valued by the social workers supporting them in the

panel. This was positive to hear because a re- development of the role of panel and panel functions has been undertaken and the feedback has been very positive. Foster carers are reporting that they feel well prepare for the panel and know what to expect. One applicant stated that she felt emotional hearing the positive feedback from panel members but also very pleased and proud to be a kinship foster carer. Another applicant, who was approved as mainstream foster carer, reported that the assessment has been very detailed but was a positive experience as was the panel process.

- The Multi-agency Placement Permanence Service (MASPPS) training workshops have also proved popular with foster carers who have been able to actively take part in these shorter sessions provided by the therapeutic team on topics directly related to caring for children in foster care. Further sessions are planned on the consultation process for social workers and foster carers to ask advice on possible referral to the team and MAPPS panel which as a fostering service we welcome.
- Consultation events attended by foster carers and staff from the fostering support team provided opportunities for foster carers to share their views and comments on the service provided by fostering in RCT. They have spoken of how they feel well supported by their supervising social worker, and how queries are dealt with quickly when they contacted the fostering support team. Some of their concerns are relating the fees and allowances and uplifts. The national Foster Wales Team have recently written out to foster carers to explain developments and Welsh Government are commissioning work to address the harmonisation of fees in and uplifts in allowances.

In 2022, RCT Fostering Service undertook a new style consultation exercise with connected persons (Kinship) foster carers and mainstream foster carers to find out their thoughts and feelings in relation to the assessment process and support provided by the service. This way of consulting proved very successful, and a similar survey will be completed in March / April 2023. The survey will focus on what carers feel work well and support them in their role, the things they feel don't work so well and what the fostering service and children's services could improve on.

Kinship Cymru continue to provide a service to our kinship foster carers in RCT and have provided an update on their involvement over the past year.

Kinship Connect is an intensive 1:1, emotional support, guidance, and advocacy service for kinship carers, on any order or no order. The project provides carers with direct access to a project worker who can offer emotional support, a listening ear, and sign posting to other services for the carer, as well as support and guidance through Court proceedings and PLO.

The worker will link in with any/all other services involved with the family and bridge the gap between the statutory services and the family. The worker will advocate at CLA, CASP and CP reviews, as well as school meetings, meetings with CAF/CASS, Snap Cymru, educational psychologists, health professions etc. We also facilitate twice monthly support groups, a WhatsApp chat group and arrange face to face events for carers to gain peer support. We access and apply for grants via Buttle UK. We have access to our dedicated Welsh advice worker via our advice line, who as well as

providing advice on legal, housing, education, and welfare benefits; she can also apply for other grants, such as CIN, Comic relief etc.

So far during the commissioned period.

- We have supported 46 number of carers with 1:1 support and meeting advocacy.
- We have over 100 carers accessing peer support via the WhatsApp and Facebook page.
- We have accessed just short of £14,000 of Buttle grants.
- Facilitated 16 virtual support group and 2 face to face events, attended by over 130 carers.
- Provided Foodbank Vouchers to 9 families.
- Provided Christmas gifts for over 30 children and 5 festive food hampers.

The support provided by our service is instrumental maintaining placements and provided the much-needed support tailored for each family needs, empowering them to meet future challenges and get the best for the children they care for.

Quotes from carers:

- Vickie is amazing. She's listened many times when I was stressed. The afternoon tea was great as it stopped us feeling isolated. I'm looking forward to more face-to-face events. Being part of Kinship has made us feel so much better, there are people like us to talk to and I've made a new friend out of it – Kinship Carer RCT
- Vickie has been unbelievable. Brilliant. We couldn't have managed without her help. We would have been lost without Vickie throughout this whole process. If it's been promised by Vickie, it has been done. – Kinship Carer RCT
- I will always access the group as well as I feel I have made friends when before was so lonely now I am not so much. – Kinship Carer RCT.
- The grant accessed has made my granddaughter feel that this is her home now and she is more settled. – Kinship Carer RCT

Quotes from professionals:

- Kinship Connected has made a big difference to nan to have someone to speak to, being able to meet with other kinship families. – Play Therapist Comets and Rockets
- The Kinship Connected Project has made a big difference to our work for families who are referred who are kinship carers. – Play Therapist Comets and Rockets
- Victoria is well-informed in respect of legislation and regulations that govern Kinship care arrangements and therefore provides accurate advice to carers and challenge of children services when appropriate to do so. – Independent Reviewing Officer RCT
- Having the support from Kinship Cymru offered an independent person who could also advocate alongside me as the fostering Social Worker. Having a worker helped my carer feel even more supported with her emotional well-being and gave her a voice when she didn't feel had one. – Social Worker RCT

Staff consultation is another area we are improving across Children's Services. We actively encourage social workers to attend practitioner forums to gather staff viewpoints on the services and what could improve wellbeing, staff retention, and improve outcomes for both staff and the children in our care. A staff wellbeing survey was conducted in 2022 and feedback from these events informs future planning. We have fostering representation on the practitioner group which is useful for fostering developments. As a service the quality of assessments and supervision of foster carers and the review process will be our focus in the coming year.

Consultation with staff in the Fostering Service also takes place in regular Team Meetings and the Regional Development Manager will attend these meetings to discuss the work programmes. During the next reporting period there are plans to arrange a Fostering and SGO and Placement Service Consultation Workshop to seek staff views on the current structure of the service, what works well, current challenges and actions needed to further improve the quality of the service.

### Children/Young People's Views

There is a new participation graduate officer in post, and this has been a busy and exciting period of engagement with our looked after children and young people which will feed into a wider strategy to improve how we listen effectively to the young people in our care. Voices from care have continued to complete direct consultation work and ensured young people can attend the regular care experienced forums, reviews, and direct work not only have their voice heard but to promote their lived experiences at a strategic, policy and legislative level both locally and nationally.

Children in foster care will be able contribute to the annual "Get Involved" survey to capture the themes that are important to them. The ambition of the new RCT participation strategy is to not only ensure co production but also ensure the voice of the child is heard in service delivery and development and the future model will include bi-annual feedback on any changes made. The participation events have been arranged through face-to-face sessions, virtual meet ups and through website and apps. One session, a building strengths workshop, focused on a strengths-based approach and the positive qualities shared from the young people were, "Strong", "Confident", "Creative", "Resilient". The 8 –13-year-old group workshop created written material and requested more nature activities and arts and crafts. The third participation event focused on education issues and linked in with the new CLA education virtual schools' team that has now been created in RCT.

The Fostering Support Team undertake consultation with children/young people as part of the annual review process for foster carers. Supervising social workers in the team use a range of methods to gain children's views on where they live, and who they live with, and can include one to one consultation sessions, direct work, and observation. The views of other household members and the childcare social worker as also sought as part of the annual review process and feedback is provided to the foster carers to inform future planning and address any issues that may arise regarding the quality of care being provided.



To improve the fostering services to children we have undertaken an exercise to redevelop all the foster carer profiles. This includes logging information and photographs of foster carers, their households, and properties to be able to give relevant and up to date information to childcare social workers and children looked after before a child enters placement. All newly approved foster carers will create their own foster care profiles and the fostering support team will assist current carers in this process. One of our pioneer foster carers has assisted with this and her input has been invaluable.

The fostering support team ran 19 activities from the beginning of July to the end of September for the fostering community in RCT which also included residential, fostering, SGO and Kinship Cymru. These events included, bowling, picnics, outdoor activities, cinema trips. The total number of children / young people that attended over this time was 675 children, total number of adults 359. The team manager received very positive feedback from children and adults as the events really helped to bring fostering families together.

### Parent's views

Building strong supportive relationships is key to the work we undertake with foster carers and parents, and this is an area we also want to develop to ensure parents views (where appropriate) are gained as part of the annual review process.

We are looking to ensure that a report from the parents is captured as part of the reviewing process and continue to work closely with the IROs who review the care and support plans for all children looked after in RCT. The fostering social workers attend all the CLA reviews when invited and this works well in not only supporting the foster carers and child but also building good relationships with parents. Going forward IRO's can directly pass on the positive views of parents as part of their consultations.

### Compliments

All compliments received about the fostering service are registered with the Complaints department centrally and reported to managers and CLAQA. Feedback received directly from the teams would suggest that further compliments have been received but not formally noted to the relevant department. Lost of complimentary quotes from foster carers and children are contained in our foster carer surveys and from our participation officer's report on direct work with children

The foster panel chair has provided regular positive feedback on assessments being of a high standard and the foster carers have reported improved methods of being part of panel that is largely online, but how they can input in a meaningful way.

### **What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further?**

Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of engagement, feedback, and monitoring and CIW reports.

The foster carer consultation events are popular and prove to be useful in developing our support services. The Face-to-face consultation will continue and the workshop for foster carers will be encouraged, RCT fostering will look to provide a venue, refreshments, and staff to facilitate these events and enable foster carers to take an active part in the future developments.

A more robust system for ensuring that feedback is given to foster carers following consultation events will be implemented So that any actions taken within the service as a direct result of the consultation are highlighted and we demonstrate that we are actively listening. This will improve co-production and the quality of the service.

The team manager of the reviewing service and the team manager of the fostering support team are planning to meet more regularly to look at how carers, children and parents' view's and experiences of fostering (as part of the CLA review) can be improved This will also require us to develop our reporting systems to be able to better capture and analyse this feedback to improve our understanding and positively impact service delivery as a result.

The changes that have been made to the independent foster panel over the course of the year will be evaluated within the next survey to our foster carers. The Panel advisor and panel chair will undertake to review the panel process annually using a 360° approach.

**What specific action do we need to take to make improvements successful and how will this be measured?**

**Improved consultation with foster carers and fostering staff on the Foster Wales regional work programme.** Team managers to attend the Regional Operational Group Meetings and Foster carers will be encouraged to take part in the wider Foster Wales consultation events to ensure their issues are highlighted as part of the agenda.

The fostering team managers will also attend regional Foster Wales meetings and the service manager will attend the strategic group to ensure Foster Wales RCT are well positioned and supported to meet the local and regional work plan.

**Improve the timelessness of the Annual Review process for foster carers and continue to hold regular panel agenda meetings to ensure assessments and reviews are on track.**

**Encourage the use of the foster care guides which provide information about the service available to children/young people and fosters carers to ensure that those using the service are fully informed of their rights.**

Continue to use Foster Carer profiles as part of the matching process in the placement team and by social workers as part of the placement process.

Improvement to the fostering service will be measured as part of the placement stability and permanence processes that report to CLA QA.

## Summary

The rights of children and young people are at the centre of our work in the fostering service. By ensuring children, foster carers, parents, and social workers' views are recognised we are better informed about the way in which we provide fostering services for children looked after.

### **2. People are happy and supported to maintain their ongoing health, development, and overall well-being. This includes intellectual, social, and behavioural development**

**What we do well and what is the evidence for it?** Include a summary of arrangements in place including methods for collecting views and a summary of views received from people who use the service and professionals.

To provide a robust and responsive fostering service, foster carers must be supported to provide high quality of care for children looked after and work in collaboration with parents, social workers, education, health, and other professionals involved in the child's care and support plan.

RCT was fortunate to be part of the fostering wellbeing programme established as a pilot by Fostering Network to encourage professionals to work together with a focus on improving wellbeing outcomes. Also creating a shared language for multi-agency professionals and a shared framework to operate and contribute to workforce development.

Specific outcomes include:

- Greater recognition that Foster Carers are key part of the team alongside teachers and social workers and play an important role as "First Educators".
- Increased engagement with foster carers and social workers through integrated activities and the development of a shared approach.
- Greater knowledge and confidence displayed by foster carers and advocating for their child and accessing education support services.
- Increased knowledge and confidence levels amongst foster carer and staff and greater clarity regarding the role they can play educational attainment of children looked after.
- Improved understanding of other links between emotional wellbeing and education attainment.
- Increased access for foster carers to peer support for training and information.
- Potential benefits and the recruitment and retention of foster carers through the development of peer support network and enhanced wellbeing.
- Additional local resources to support the fostering community through the introduction of fostering wellbeing champions.

RCT continues to work to the Fostering Well-Being model and has been very successful in recruitment and development of the foster care pioneer programme.

## Pioneers

After the completion of the original Master Class training held by Fostering Network in collaboration with Cardiff University, foster carers were invited for an interview if they wanted to be selected to become RCT Fostering Support Services Pioneers. In April 2020, we had recruited 4 Pioneers who had been trained as part of the Fostering Networks Fostering Wellbeing programme. During the lockdown period we focused on supporting the children they are looking after and their own families due to the Covid 19 restrictions it was agreed we would utilise their skills more flexibly, whilst honouring the ethos of the fostering wellbeing programme which was around supporting carers with learning and development and improving outcomes for children.

Throughout the year the pioneers have undertaken the following.

- Workshop Events with Kinship Carers and Mainstream Carers
- Day time support to both kinship and mainstream carers, mainly at weekends to either prevent placement breakdown or promote placement stability.
- Peer support and mentoring of kinship carers and newly approved carers.
- Facilitating peer support and support the carers' Facebook pages
- Organising and facilitating activities and events

The scheme has been so successful and with such positive outcomes we hope to further recruit pioneer kinship foster carers. Going forward the Pioneers will continue to undertake development work in the fostering service, including supporting other foster carers in working with the children in their care support with the ongoing implementation of the Learning and Development Framework

## Post Approval Learning and Development Framework

RCT Fostering Service is committed to ensuring all our accommodation supports the personal achievement and wellbeing of the children in our care by our continued commitment to the post approval learning and development framework for foster carers to.

- Provide a consistent approach to post-approval learning and development for foster carers in Wales
- Provide guidance on how the Learning and Development Framework and the Social Care Wales' All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care Workers fit together
- Create a mechanism for collating and reviewing of the learning and development achievements of foster carers as well as the identification of future needs
- Create a clear pathway for foster carers to map their own professional development
- Provide a resource for supervising social workers to discuss with foster carers their learning and development needs
- Promote a range of learning and development opportunities
- Place an expectation upon foster carers to take greater ownership of their own learning and development
- It creates clear and transparent standards to strive to achieve

RCT Fostering Service has signed up to ensuring the framework by including this as part of supervision and annual review paperwork. It is anticipated that this will improve knowledge within each fostering household and therefore outcomes for children and young people in our care.

It has now been agreed in RCT that a new review of the implementation of the framework will take place and during this reporting period it has been agreed that a re-launch is required in 2023. The regional manager will facilitate this and work with the regional training department to implement.

### Health

All children and young people placed with foster carers should be registered with a GP, dentist, and optician local and/or accessible to the foster placement. Registration of children with GP, health and optician is monitored through Foster Carer Supervision, contact from the CLA nurse and through the statutory CLA review process.

RCT foster carers receive training on meeting the health needs of children and young people in foster care. Foster carers also receive training on first aid for children. There continues to be links with the Cwm Taf Specialist Children Looked After Nursing team who are available to discuss health concerns and offer advice to foster carers. Health promotion is also discussed e.g. smoking, healthy eating, drugs, safety and safer sex. Issues are discussed as a part of the supervising social workers four weekly visits to foster carers and recorded in the supervision records. Any medication prescribed to children is recorded by the foster carer and provided to the supervising social worker and the child's allocated social worker.

The issue of children having access to a dentist and being registered with a GP are addressed as part of the CLA review process and escalated as part of the IRO process on a case-by-case basis. This process includes the IRO manager, the team manager and senior managers if required.

### Education and leisure activities

Foster carers are fully aware of RCT's commitment to promote the leisure activities of children placed with them. All fostering households in RCT have access to a leisure pass enabling to access free leisure activities within the borough. This includes foster children, foster parents, and other children within the household. The Local Authority have several healthy living initiatives that take place within the Borough, and these are promoted to foster carers through various communication channels.

The senior education psychologist has provided the following data with regards to school exclusions for this reporting period. Going forward the new virtual head will provide this information along with the new curriculum in Wales and new ways of gathering the data on outcomes and achievements. The fostering service are looking forward to working with the new CLA education virtual school team and have already made good links to improve the outcomes of children looked after in foster care. This has been strengthened by participating in the fostering wellbeing programme with the educational psychologists

**Table 1: Incidents of Fixed Term (FT) and permanent exclusions in the academic year 2021/22 involving RCT Children who are Looked After. Exclusions for school population - Academic year 2021 - 22**

Number of students	CLA	Non CLA
Fixed term	114	2298
Perm	1	18

Attendance Figures for Children who are Looked After (CLA)

Table 2 highlights that the attendance levels of children and young people who are looked after and compares to the attendance of the general population of children in schools. This data shows that CLA attendance is similar and better in certain school types when compared with non CLA pupils.

**Table 2: Attendance Levels of statutory school aged children between 02/09/2021 and 22/07/2022 who are Looked compared with Non CLA**

Overall attendance in RCT schools	
CLA pupils	Non CLA pupils
88.03%	85.05%
Primary school attendance	
92.57%	89.25%
Secondary school attendance	
86.65%	82.47%

In response to the disrupted educational experience due to COVID -19, PDG LAC money has provided an offer of online tuition in Maths or English for all Key Stage 4 pupils taking exams. This has proved very popular and has continued for those children in foster care if required.

It is estimated that there are 200,000 children being brought up by family members or friends in the United Kingdom in what is termed as 'Kinship Care'. These kinship carers have stepped in to care for children whose parents are unable to look after them and keep their families together, and it represents three times the number of children in the national foster care system – and is a growing figure. Kinship care is one of the main ways to provide a sense of security, continuity and belonging for children who cannot live with their parents, and it provides high levels of stability and enduring support well into young adulthood.

At the end of this reporting period, RCT have 229 children placed with Relative Carers. This figure includes approved and non-approved kinship carers. The number has decreased by 10 when compared to the same time last year.

The Fostering Service has a dedicated support team for foster carers with allocated social workers that provide support and supervision we have been working closely with a local project provided by Kinship Cymru to ensure a range of services are provided.

Kinship Connected works with the concept of social action: building resilience through peer-to-peer volunteering led by kinship carers.

The support provided by the Kinship Connected Programme in RCT includes the following:

**One to one support from project worker:**

- Advocacy support in meetings
- Emotional support
- Supporting the carers to attend a peer support group
- Liaising with local organisations that might be able to offer specialised support and training
- Liaising with schools or other organisations
- Supporting kinship carers with the behaviour of the child/children in their care

**Peer Support:**

- Virtual Support Groups (monthly)
- Someone Like Me – a telephone peer support service run by trained volunteers who are or have been kinship carers themselves
- Facebook group and WhatsApp group

Additionally, support is given to Kinship Carers for accessing grants from partner grant giving bodies and there is also an Independent Advice Service run by a specialist bi-lingual advisor for Wales. Advice can be accessed by kinship carers and professionals on issues such as, welfare benefits, housing, employment, legal options etc.

**Foster Carer Training**

A training needs analysis survey was held in in January 2022 for mainstream and kinship foster carers to comment on the courses offered the delivery, venues used and any online opportunities. The outcomes of the survey were used to plan the training calendar.

All foster carers can access the Local Authority training programme specifically tailored for them and have support to access training from a dedicated training officer. During the pandemic from March 2020 foster carers were able to continue their learning with our E-learning KCA suite which holds over 60 different courses relevant to fostering. Then in September 2020 we delivered a blended approach of face to face and online learning up until lockdown in December 2020. Then in January 2021 we moved all the courses online via zoom and then Teams and this progressed into 2022.

We are now able to provide face to face training however some courses remain online this is useful for foster carers who are not able to always travel to courses or attend all day training courses.

**The following courses were available face to face to our foster carers from April 2021- March 2022**

Fire Awareness	Introduction to Moving and Handling	Call, Push, Rescue (First Aid)
Level 2 Child Protection for foster carers	Recording Skills	Working with Birth Families and contact
Child Development	Advocacy and Children's Rights	Life Journey Work
Developing a secure base and promoting attachment	Supporting Education and Development for Children looked after	Promoting good health
Neurodevelopmental Behaviour Support	Bereavement and Loss in Looked after Children	Foetal Alcohol Disorder
Preparation to adoption	Digital safeguarding	Reduction of Suicide and Self Harm
Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse and the Effects on Children	Self care for foster carers	Substance misuse awareness
ELSA for foster carers	Parenting with PACE	Emotion Coaching
Growing up in care – Lived experiences	Self Awareness	Basic ICT Skills

**E – Learning**

Adolescence – understanding key issues in working with young people	Assessing and Managing Risk	Attachment and Brain Development
Behaviour and Physical Environment (inc level 4)	Brain Development and Positive Parenting	Building resilience
Building individual and community resilience: level 4	Child Development	Child Protection
Child Centred Assessment	Communicating with children and young people	Confidentiality and Record keeping
Contact in Foster Care	Domestic Violence	Emotion Coaching (inc level 4)
Equality and Diversity (inc level 4)	Impulsive behaviour	Maladaptive Behaviours level 4
Men in Children's Services	Multi disciplinary working	Narrative Work (inc level 4)
Parental Mental Health issues	Professional Development	Secondary Trauma
Self Harming behaviours	Sexualised Behaviour (inc level 4)	Team Work
The role of the foster carer	Transitions and Vulnerabilities	Understanding Trauma



In addition, bespoke training was delivered by trainers who were previously children looked after following feedback from carers asking for more real-life experiences this proved popular.

The Skills to Foster preparatory training is back up and running, it was cancelled during the first lockdown and then reinstated following guidance from the fostering network around virtual delivery.

**What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further?** Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of feedback, monitoring, CIW, any identified non-compliance, and outstanding actions.

The fostering service will continue to work in partnership with the specialist CLA colleagues in education and health to ensure that the care and support plans in place can be implemented in a timely manner.

Further recruitment of Pioneers will be undertaken to encourage their development and links with education and promote their work with current foster cares.

The data from education and health to be presented to the Children Looked After Quality Assurance Group chaired by the Service Director. This will directly relate to the children looked after in foster care and contribute to the monitoring and reviewing process.

**What specific action do we need to take to make the improvements/developments successful and how will this be measured?** Include an action plan setting out the specific outcome-focussed actions needed to improve, timescales, lead officer and performance indicators to measure improvement.

**Health and education specialists continue to attend CLAQA to report on children looked after, specifically, children excluded and GCSE attainments along with provision of annual health assessments, dental appointments, and registration with GP.**

**Kinship Cymru will continue the two day a week contract that provides RCT kinship foster carers with advice and support groups in the community and training events and one to one support if required.**

### **Summary**

RCT fostering services will continue to work closely with specialist agencies for children looked after to ensure that fostering can be part of good practice, research, and developments.

### 3. People feel safe and protected from abuse and neglect

**What we do well and the evidence for it?** Consider a summary of arrangements in place, views of the people who use the service, number of referrals etc.

The following sections relate to the performance data and activity of the fostering team with regards support and kinship assessment.

#### 1. Compliance in relation to each child

All children placed with RCT Foster carers are placed by the Child Care social worker with the supervising social worker or the Fostering team's duty worker, thus ensuring that all relevant information required to enable the carer to offer suitable care is provided to the foster carer. Where the placement is made in an emergency the supervising social worker, or the fostering duty worker will follow up during the next working day. At the point of placement, the Placement Agreement is completed and signed, if the placement is an emergency and the full documentation is unavailable, this will be provided to the carers the next working day.

#### 2. All accidents, injuries and illnesses of children placed with foster parents

All accidents and injuries are reported by the carers to their supervising social worker or duty worker as soon as possible following the incident, the allocated supervising social worker then takes responsibility for completing a report (Significant Incident Form) that is then passed to the Team Manager for any further action that may be required. This information is electronically stored on the child's file, the foster carer's file and the original is stored by the Manager. If the notification is significant, the Service Manager will be informed who will update the Head of Children's Services.

There were 3 significant events recorded between April 2021 – March 2022.

#### 3. Complaints in relation to children placed with foster carers and their outcomes.

All complaints received are registered with the Complaints department centrally. The designated Complaints Officer co-ordinates the response to all formal complaints made in relation to children placed with foster carers, and the outcomes of these complaints are provided within quarterly and annual reports to the Senior Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Board. Robust complaints procedures are in place and all staff and carers are made aware of the complaints process on becoming a foster carer or an employee of RCT CBC.

Information is provided to foster carers on how to complain via the fostering policies. Children receive information on how to complain via their allocated social worker and a referral is made to the advocacy service with the child/young person's consent. All children receive an active offer of advocacy. Activity is reported to the Corporate Parenting Board. The annual review process for foster carers considers any complaints made and their outcomes and where necessary the annual review is brought forward and referred to Foster Panel for consideration.

During 2021/22 there were 0 formal complaints and 1 contact recorded for the fostering service in RCT. There were no formal or serious complaints recorded.

4. Any allegations or suspicions of abuse in respect of children placed with foster parents and the outcome of any investigations

Any allegations made against a foster carer by children placed, children known to the carer, or any member of the foster carer's household is referred to the safeguarding manager and child protection procedures are followed. All professional abuse strategy meetings are chaired by the safeguarding manager in the area in which the carer resides. An initial assessment is completed by the child's social worker and the meeting makes the decision about whether a Section 47 investigation should be carried out. CIW are informed of any allegations. All children looked after will receive an active offer to the advocacy service and carers are offered independent Social Work support via The Fostering Network. Written advice and guidance are given to any carer subject of an investigation. The process is outlined in the Foster Carers handbook.

During the current year there have been the following matters or concern that have required professional strategy meetings: -

Total Number	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Ongoing
10	1	6	3

5. Staff Recruitment records and conduct of required checks for new workers.

Within RCT CBC, the responsibility for completing checks on newly appointed staff lies with the Human Resources department. Managers within the fostering service are informed of any issues arising for consideration in relation to DBS checks and references. All new staff working within RCT's Fostering Service are required to have:

- an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service Check (renewed every 3 years)
- employment history that details the reason for any gaps in employment
- references from previous employers
- evidence of eligibility to work in the UK
- evidence of qualifications
- registration with Social Care Wales (where required)
- satisfactory Health assessment

During the year we had 2 staff members who left the service to work in another local authority. We have inducted two new starters to the service. As at 31.3.22 the service had 2.5 vacancies.

6. Any unauthorised absences from the foster home of a child accommodated there

The expectations of foster carers when a child goes missing from a foster home is that they inform children's services and if the absence occurs out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team (EDT). When a child/young person is absent from a foster placement without authority, the matter is reported to the police and shared with

the relevant childcare social worker. If the Child is still absent from placement at the end of the working day an alert is sent to EDT to follow-up out of hours.

Procedures for Foster Carers when a child does not return to placement at the expected time, are clearly explained in the foster carer's handbook. Foster carers are aware of the All Wales Missing Persons protocol for managing children who go missing and follow this process. If a child has a history of absconding or going missing, this will be fully addressed at the time of the Initial Placement Meeting and a risk assessment completed. Foster Carers are expected to keep a record of all absences from placement.

RCT Children's Services have a joint protocol with the Police 'children missing from care' and each incident is responded to in accordance with this protocol. Information is shared with police and social services to reduce the risk of reported episodes and to gather intelligence in respect to exploitation. When a child goes missing repeatedly a Risk Management meeting may be arranged, which foster carers should attend. Every unauthorised absence triggers a notification to the Team Manager and is updated accordingly. Where the missing episodes involves the child being missing overnight or where the risks are high the Service Manager is alerted and is responsible for informing and updating the Head of Service.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, there were 8 episodes relating to 7 children. We must note that this figure relates to all children looked after and is not specific to children in Local Authority Foster Care.

7. Use of any measures of control, restraint, or discipline in respect of children accommodated in a foster home

Foster carers are provided with behaviour management guidance through the foster carer handbook and through the Skills to Foster preparation training to prevent any inappropriate use of discipline. Issues with managing the behaviour of children in foster placements is discussed during supervision visits and recorded within the supervision template. We have also updated the policy on restrictive practice and positive behaviour management.

All foster carers sign a foster carer agreement not to use any form of corporal punishment with children. Supervising social workers continually support foster carers on appropriate methods of behaviour management.

8. Medication, Medical treatment, and First Aid administered to any child placed with foster parents

All foster carers are provided with advice and guidance within the Foster Carer Handbook and through pre-approval training regarding first aid and the safe storage and provision of medication. Carers complete a record of any medication given to children placed. Any regular medication required and administered to a child placed should be contained within their care and support plan in line with their specific health needs and recorded on the minutes from the initial placement meeting. If a child placed requires emergency treatment foster carers are aware that they should notify children's services or EDT as soon as possible, the relevant Service Manager can then be contacted to provide consent. Wherever possible, birth parents are consulted. All foster carers receive First Aid training which is

renewed on a regular basis to ensure awareness of first aid processes. The medication policy in place has also been updated this year.

9. Where applicable, the standard of any education provision provided by the fostering service.

RCT Fostering Service do not provide formal education provision, however, we work closely with RCT Education services to ensure all children are receiving appropriate education as outlined in their care and support plans.

10. Records of Assessments

All records of assessment completed by the Fostering service are stored securely within WCCIS electronic data base. These can be shared with the subject after they have been quality assured by the Team Manager. All assessments are shared with the applicants prior to presentation to the foster panel.

11. Records of Fostering Panel meetings

The panel consists of:

- Chair - Independent previously registered Social Worker and Senior Manager,
- Vice Chair – Retired Social Worker/Teacher
- Cabinet member for Children’s Services
- Foster Carer
- Independent Social Worker
- 2 Experienced and qualified social workers
- Community Medical Advisor (available for advice),
- Legal Advisor (available for advice)
- Panel Advisor – Team Manager, Fostering/ Kinship/Assessments and Placements
- Agency Decision Maker – Director of Children’s Services.

In this review period, swift arrangements were made for the fostering panel to continue to operate as a virtual panel during the global pandemic resulting in their being only one less panel held than the previous review period. Attendance from members of the panel is very strong which has enabled the panel to be quorate and proceed when scheduled.

One of the benefits of a virtual panel felt by panel members was the increase in attendances from the child’s social worker, as they didn’t have to travel to panel.

Annual training was arranged for panel members who attended training on the quality assurance role of the fostering panel and its functions.

In the year 2021-2022 the foster panel has met and made recommendations on:  
**April 2021-March 2022**

Number of Panels	27
Approvals-mainstream carers	11
Immediate Placements (connected persons under Section 76 SSWBA (W) 2014)	14 (Reg 26 placements)
Annual foster carer reviews	43
Change of approval status	11
Terminations of approval-mainstream	5
Connected persons/ Kinship approvals	35
Terminations of approved kinship carers	25

### 12. Duty rosters of persons working for the fostering agency, as arranged, and worked

The staff of the Fostering Service work flexi arrangements in line with the HR policies of RCT CBC. This includes agile working. The teams' members can use desks located in offices in RCT and utilise hot desks within Ty Trevithick and operate out of other Council premises and locations through a laptop and mobile phone which is provided to them. During the global pandemic, staff have predominately worked from home and/or hybrid models of working. The hours worked and any annual leave or sickness are monitored by the line manager of each staff member through an internal flexi spreadsheet, which can log any hours worked/ missed.

A duty officer is available to offer support and advice between office hours with support available to carers out of hours through the Emergency Duty Team.

### 13. Minutes of staff meetings

All minutes of staff minutes are securely stored electronically and are easily available to the staff team and managers. Staff meetings occur weekly to offer the team chance to 'catch up' with:

- changes in placements
- vacancies and potential matching considerations
- placements stability concerns
- carers that are likely to need additional support in the coming week

Monthly the team meet to provide opportunity to have updates on changes in legislation, research, regional and local services.

There are Staff Briefings at intervals through the year which are led by the Head of Service and allow staff to receive updates and raise any questions or challenges. The Fostering Service is represented at these briefings. The Head of

Service and Director offer an open-door policy and will always respond to invitations to attend team meetings.

**What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further?** Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of feedback, monitoring, CIW and any identified non-compliance and outstanding actions

The Fostering Teams will continue to provide support to foster panel members by ensuring relevant training takes place on at least an annual basis for all members including, chair, vice chair and panel advisers.

Annual appraisals with fostering panel members are undertaken and will going forward be held with the panel chair and panel advisor

A dedicated Business Support service will be available to ensure that panel functions are timely, and the collecting of data is robust.

Further develop systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing quality of service including the functioning of the Fostering Panel in line with The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018.

**What specific action do we need to take to make the improvements/developments successful and how will this be measured?** Include an action plan setting out the specific outcome-focussed actions needed to improve, timescales identified, lead officer and the performance indicators to measure improvement.

Continue to work closely with the fostering panel and provide a relevant training event for panel members in this review period.

**Undertake annual appraisals with foster panel members in this review period to inform future planning.**

**Continue to develop quality assurance and audit work including dip sampling and take forward lessons learned and actions.**

### **Summary**

This is a large and busy fostering service that is part of the wider children's services department. The Service Delivery Plan outlines overall outcomes, so they are clear with actions, timescales, and lead officers, and is monitored by the HOS.

**4. People live in accommodation that best supports their well-being and achievement of their personal outcomes.**

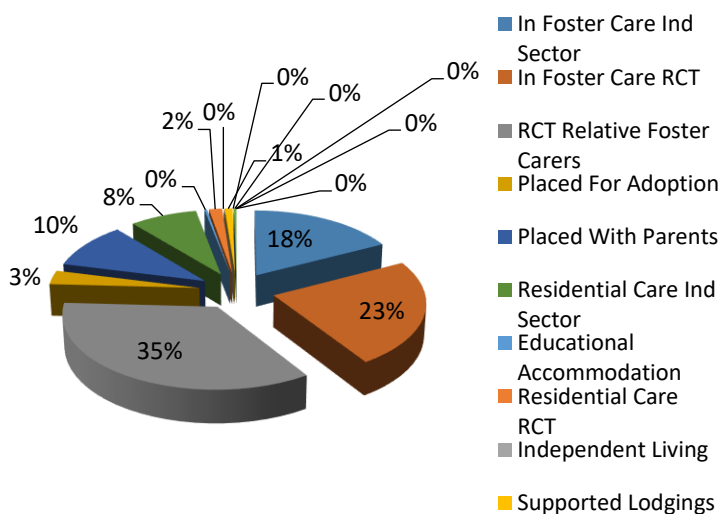
**What we do well and the evidence for it?** Consider a summary of arrangements in place including access to the local community; how privacy, dignity and confidentiality is maintained, and a summary of views obtained on any changes to the environment

The following headings summarise the arrangements in place to ensure fostering accommodation for children looked after meets their identified needs and outcomes in the local community.

The number of children who need to be looked after by RCT has been decreasing gradually over the last 12 months and there currently 654 children looked after which is 39 less children looked after than at the same period last year.

**Placements:**

**CLA at 15/04/2022**



Based on current children looked after numbers, we have the most children placed with Relative Carers (35%). This figure includes approved and non-approved kinship carers. The number has decreased by 10 when compared to the same time last year.

In House Foster Care placements continue to be higher than Independent Sector Foster Care. The number of Independent Foster Care placements has decreased by 2% when compared to last year.

The number of children placed in external residential placements has increased by 2 when compared to last year. 52 placements in Apr 22 compared to 50 in Apr 21.



The number of Mother and Baby placements has decreased from 4 to 2 over the last 12 months.

The number of children placed with parents has decreased by 1 when compared to last year. 66 placements in Apr 22 compared to 67 in Apr 21.

**Placement Stability:**

32 children who were looked after on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 experienced 3 or more changes of placement. Performance has improved since Quarter 3 2021/22, and we achieved 4.9% at year end. Children move placement for a variety of different reasons & some of the 3rd placements will relate to children's moves to a permanent long-term placement. Performance can also be affected by the continued high number of children looked after which can put pressure on placement availability.

Stability of children in placement remains a priority for RCT as is maintaining children within the Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority area. In the forthcoming review period, it is anticipated that performance in this area will be further support by the revision of the Placement Stability Policy (formally Disruptions Policy)

**Foster Carer Profile:**

<b>Approvals and Terminations of Approval</b>	Mainstream Foster Care		Connected Persons Foster Care	
	Households	Placements	Households	Placements
Number as at 1st April 2021	100	171	146	264
Number of approvals/changes between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022	12	19	42	58
Number that left the service between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022	14	23	35	53
Number of fostering households/placements as at 31st March 2022	98	167	153	269

There have been 14 mainstream foster carers who had their approvals terminated between April 2021 and March 2022. The highest number of approvals that ended relate to carers retiring. There was one resignation relating to fostering not meeting expectations that relates to a carer that had a placement breakdown and resigned as

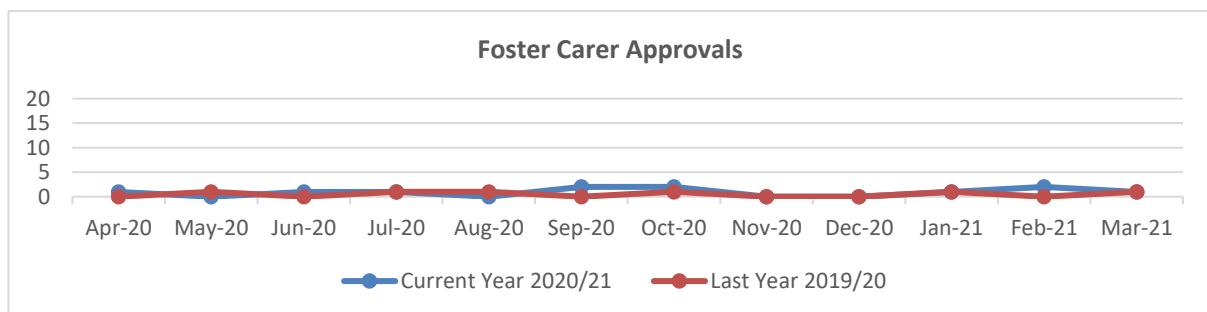
a result. There was also one resignation relating to concerns, complaints and allegations relating to a carer who was not meeting fostering competencies.

There have been 35 kinship foster carers de-registered between April 2021 and March 2022. The highest number of approvals that ended relate to carers converting to being SGO carers.

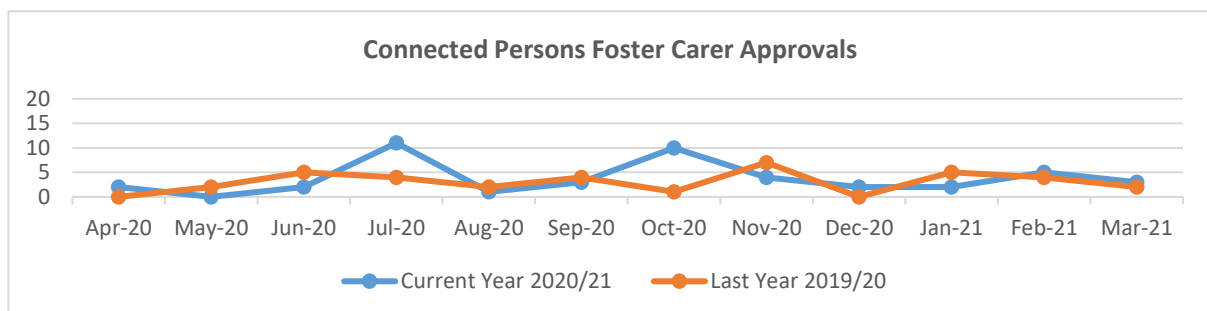
**Marketing and Recruitment:**

From 1st April 2019, we have been working in collaboration with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to operate a Regional Front Door for fostering recruitment. The team consists of a Regional Development Manager, Regional Recruitment Officer and Regional Communications and Marketing Officer. The Regional Front door team work closely with the fostering service managers in each local authority to ensure a seamless approach to the recruitment and retention of foster carers. In RCT the service is overseen by the Head of Service and performance of the regional service is monitored by the regional management board.

The recruitment team facilitates all enquiries, recruitment calls, marketing activity and initial visits up to the point of assessment for both RCT and Merthyr and Bridgend. Once at the point of assessment each Local Authority has a dedicated team manager who allocates assessments. In RCT the Team Manager is responsible for allocation of assessments to independent social workers.



There were 12 newly approved mainstream foster carers in this review period, an increase of 1 carer household compared to the previous review period.



There were 42 Kinship Carer approvals in this review period, an decrease of 3 carer households compared to the previous review period

### Future Developments

The Foster Wales national brand has now been launched and a structured a marketing plan has been implemented.

RCT fostering service has a supportive and flexible foster care provision which ranges from 0 to 18 years with experienced foster carers who have short- and long-term placement availability and newly approved carers who are fully supported in their fostering journey. There are currently foster carers who offer short break provisions and carers who specialise in providing baby care and others who provide a home to the teenagers.

**What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further?** Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of feedback, monitoring, CIW and any identified non-compliance and outstanding actions

In terms of service need, we have an identified gap in our mainstream foster carer resources is in respect of foster carers for older, more complex children or larger sibling groups and parent and child placements.

**What specific action do we need to take to make the improvements/developments successful and how will this be measured?** Include an action plan setting out the specific outcome-focussed actions needed to improve, timescales identified, lead officer and the performance indicators to measure improvement.

To improve our foster care provision an overall recruitment campaign is in place that addresses the specific needs including training.

**A working group is established to address parent and child provision specifically parent and child in the community.**

A HOS led service Fostering Delivery plan is in place.

### Summary

RCT Childrens Services are working continually to ensure a robust, fit for purpose and child-centred Fostering Service exists. The Statement of Purpose and the Fostering Service Delivery Plan sets out our core goals and our steps to achieve them.

This Quality-of-Care report will assist in planning for the future and delivering quality care to children looked after.

The following bullet points are the goals to implemented over the coming year.

### **Future Planning and Developments**

- **Continue Consultations to enhance understanding of foster carers, young people, and parents' experiences**
- **An up to date fostering guide available and accessible for foster carers and children**
- **Foster Carer Profiles in place for young people and social workers to improve the matching process**
- **Health and Education information collected specifically to contribute to the monitoring process**
- **Pioneer Foster Carers recruitment and support systems developed across mainstream, and kinship foster carers**
- **Parent and Child Training and development to encourage existing foster carers to transfer to this provision**
- **Foster Wales Recruitment campaign developed to recruit more foster carers locally**
- **Foster Panel training and appraisals to support the Quality Assurance role of the foster panel members**
- **Review the impact of Learning and Development Framework for foster carer training**
- **Develop quality assurance and audit work and to take forward lessons learned.**
- **Further develop systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing quality of service including the functioning of the Fostering Panel in line with The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018.**

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