



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022-23

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28th NOVEMBER 2022

RHONDDA CYNON TAF CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2021-2024

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

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with information regarding Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2021-2024. The report includes an outline of the strategy and implementation to date.

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

- 3.1 RCT Children's Services 'Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024 [Appendix 1] sets out the Council's response to the significant recruitment and retention challenges being faced by the service. This strategy has a clear vision for its workforce:

Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services' workforce is motivated, engaged and valued; staff have the capacity, skills, competence and confidence to meet the needs of children and families.

- 3.2 The aims of the Children's Services Workforce Development strategy 2021-2024 are to develop:

- A workforce in sufficient numbers with the right values, knowledge, skills and confidence to meet the needs of the children and families in RCT.
- Our workforce feels valued, involved and is treated fairly and their well-being is supported.
- A clear model of intervention which underpins our way of working
- Learning is delivered through accessible and flexible routes.
- Digital skills capability underpins care delivery.
- Practitioners have access to the resources they need to do their job.
- A workforce that is reflective of the local population’s diversity, Welsh language and cultural identity.
- Staff voices are heard and influence service developments.

3.3 A workforce plan has been developed which has focused on the seven themes highlighted in the Healthier Wales: Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales 2020-2030, as key to delivering a successful workforce strategy. The seven key themes are:

- An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce
- Attraction and recruitment
- Workforce Supply and Shape
- Seamless Workforce Model
- Digitally Developing Workforce.
- Excellent training and development.
- Leadership and Succession.

What we know about the current Children’s Services Workforce:

3.4 Recruitment and retention are a significant challenge for Children’s Services. Recruitment difficulties are further exacerbated by shortages in the labour market of qualified and experienced Social Work practitioners.

Table I -Children’s Services Workforce Data (Qualified Social Workers)

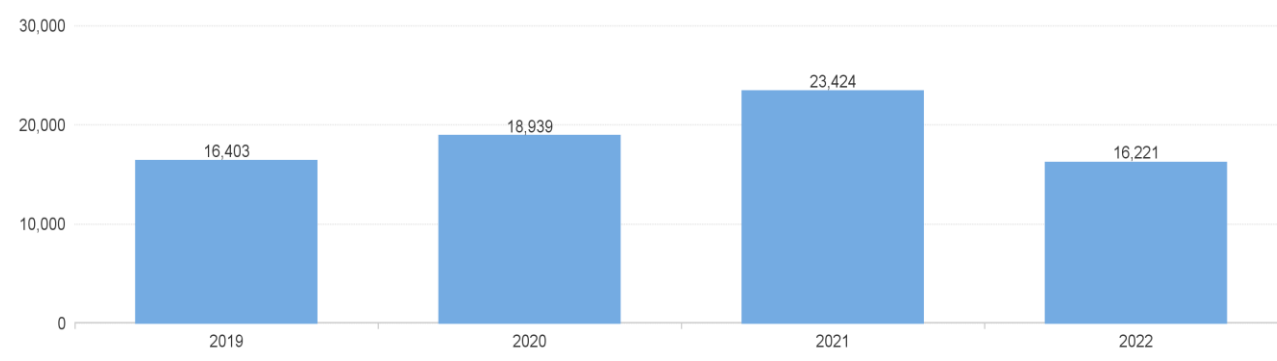
2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	April 2022- Sept 2022
32.50 Vacancies	34.00 Vacancies	35.30 Vacancies	37.00 Vacancies	
19.81 Starters 16.20 Leavers	15.60 Starters 20.81 Leavers	15.00 Starters 13.00 Leavers	9.00 Starters 10.00 Leavers	12.00 Starters 14.00 Leavers
20.33% Vacancy Rate	21.07% Vacancy Rate	22.44% Vacancy Rate	23.52% Vacancy Rate	

Data has been extracted from the RCT Social Care Workforce Survey.
 In 2021 changes were made to data requirements of the Social Care Wales Annual Workforce Survey, for the purpose of this report we have maintained consistency with earlier data collections.
 * Does not include internal transfer data

- 3.5 The vacancy rate across Children’s Services remains high at 20+%, with the Early Intervention and Intensive Intervention Teams experiencing the highest vacancy rates, up to 40% in early September 2022. A Risk Management Plan is in place and this is monitored by the Children’s Services Workforce Strategy Steering Group.
- 3.6 At the same time, demand is increasing, and our potential to recruit qualified experienced social workers in step with our need is likely to be insufficient for the next 3 years, placing further pressure on service provision and our workforce. The number of contacts to the Information, Advice and Assistance Team have continued to rise as presented in Table II below. This places further pressure on service provision and our workforce.

Table II - IAA Contacts
01/01/2019 to 24/08/2022 - as at 24/08/2022

Total IAA Contacts per Calendar Year
Includes all Phone-call Activities where the Key Team is Children's IAA



- 3.7 Based on the average rate of contacts received per month this year to date, if demand continues in the same way to the end of the year then we are looking at around a 4% increase in contacts for 2022. A medium term plan is being developed to ensure that teams within Intensive Intervention are able to meet their statutory responsibilities and regulatory requirements; whilst other longer term actions outlined in the Workforce Strategy are implemented. (See section 5).
- 3.8 The principles applied to the medium-term plan are:
- The approaches to supporting children, young people and families are alternatives to the usual practice in RCT to enable a safe and effective service to be provided.
 - Teams are supported and structure and services match the optimum model for delivery of best possible outcomes during a period of higher vacancy.

The medium-term plan is currently being finalised.

4. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 4.0 Implementation of the Children’s Services Workforce Strategy 2021-2024 is key to addressing the recruitment and retention challenges we are facing. Progress to date is summarised below, linked to the seven key themes of the strategy:

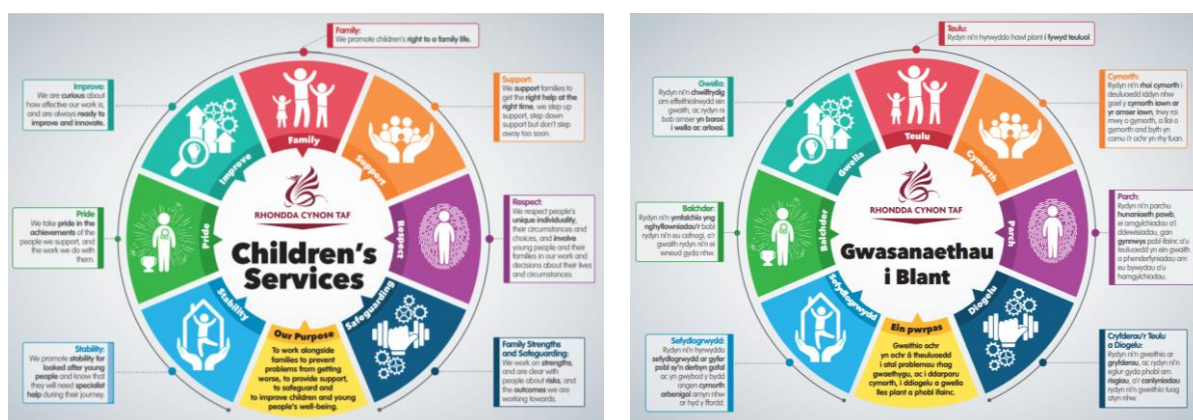
4.1 An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce:

- We have implemented an annual survey, please see the results from the April 2022 survey, attached as **Appendix A**.
- Consultation has highlighted the need to ensure good communication we have created a Children's Services Communication Cycle, which will include quarterly service update infographics, attached as **Appendix B**.
- A Practitioner Forum has been established and is now meeting on a quarterly basis.
- Exit Interviews process developed and piloted and is now being embedded within Children's Services.
- Practitioner Wellbeing
We are developing a programme to support practitioner wellbeing, with the focus of nurturing supportive resilient teams. This will include peer to peer support with Schwartz Rounds. We are also providing opportunities to access reflective sessions from practitioner psychologists for groups and individuals as required.

4.2 Attraction and recruitment:

4.2.1 As part of the Workforce Strategy a Media Strategy has been developed to enhance Children's Services attraction and promote recruitment. Implementation has included:

- The creation of a visual identifier which reflects RCT Children's Services Values and Purpose:



- New webpages have been developed to support our enhanced and ongoing attraction campaign:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/JobsandTraining/Jobs/SocialCareandSocialWork/WorkingwithChildrenFamilies/RhonddaCynonTafChildrensServices.aspx>

4.2.2 The Council is improving its social media presence and two marketing campaigns have been delivered for Children's Services this year, one targeted at Social Work

practitioners (March 2022) the other at Children's Residential Services (October 2022). The Social Media strategy has included using:

- To utilise social media platforms (Twitter and Linked In)
- Paid Advertising- Facebook, Linked In, Wales Online, Community Care.
- Virtual Recruitment Evenings for Social Workers, the residential recruitment campaign.
- Attendance at recruitment events.

A recruitment event targeted at student Social Workers is being held in December 2022.

4.2.3 Social Work Marketing Campaign (March 2022) Outcomes:

- Increased Media Presence- 4,090 total webpage views, 250% rise in the term 'Rhondda Cynon Taf' being searched in relation to 'Social work jobs in Wales'.
- Increased Applications- (50% internal, 50% external/students) However, currently no mechanism to capture workforce recruitment data in a consistent manner and some vacancies did not receive as much interest as others.
- Reached a wide audience and generated interest through paid advertising.
- Visual content and 'lessons learned' to inform future campaigns.

4.3 Workforce Supply and Shape:

- We have increased our investment in the established "Growing our Own" scheme by expanding the number of Children's Services staff able to be sponsored to access the Open University Social Work Degree programme with a guaranteed Social Work role on completion of registration. 8 practitioners from Children's Services commenced on the programme this year.
- We have also recently increased the "tie in" period for such staff from 2 to 3 years to assist with retention.
- We have proposed a new Bursary Scheme to Cardiff University and the University of South Wales and aim to develop this by the next academic year. RCT will offer reimbursement of course fees to a number of students who are also residents of RCT. This will be in return for a commitment by the student to join RCT as a Social Worker on qualifying. Legal agreements are in draft and with the respective Universities for consideration.
- We have introduced allowances for those undertaking Practice Educator roles (£100 for L1 and £500 for L2 and L3), take up to host Social Work students has been significantly higher as a result allowing us to maintain the level of placements, we can provide for the Degree program.
- We are also looking to improve our offer to those seeking work experience in Social Care and Social Work. This will mean closer working with schools and colleges and may extend to include taster sessions, shadowing all as part of the drive to maintain recruitment in a changing workforce.
- Workforce Data - Workforce data reporting mechanisms within iTrent are now being developed as a priority.

4.4 Seamless Workforce Model

- Recruitment for the post of Lead Manager for Social Work Practice was undertaken in September 2022, unfortunately we were unable to appoint. (We intend to readvertise the post).

4.4.1 Training and development will be closely linked to the implementation of an agreed model of social work practice across Children's Services.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no Welsh language implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 Consultation activity is outlined within the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Where identified funding opportunities are explored to meet the cost of new developments.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 Implementation of the Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2021-2024 aims to ensure that the Council is able to effectively support vulnerable children and families and meet the requirements of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

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

10.1 The implementation of the Children's Services Workforce Strategy will make a positive contribution towards the Council's corporate priorities, in particular:

- Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful by enabling a sustainable social work practitioner workforce, and
- Enabling prosperity, creating the opportunity for people to fulfil their potential and prosper.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Through the implementation of the Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2021-2024, we aim to achieve a workforce in sufficient numbers with the right values, knowledge, skills and confidence to meet the needs of the children and families in RCT. A workforce who feels valued, involved and treated fairly and have their well-being supported – attached as **Appendix 1**.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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