



Consortiwm Comisiynu
Cymru ar gyfer Plant
Childrens' Commissioning
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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
<i>* For additional activity across the Consortium please refer to 4Cs work programme</i>	

RCT COMMISSIONED INDEPENDENT PLACEMENT PROFILE

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

Active Placements	Framework	Non-Framework	Total
Foster	110	5	115
Residential	38	20	58
Total	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. (16th 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.

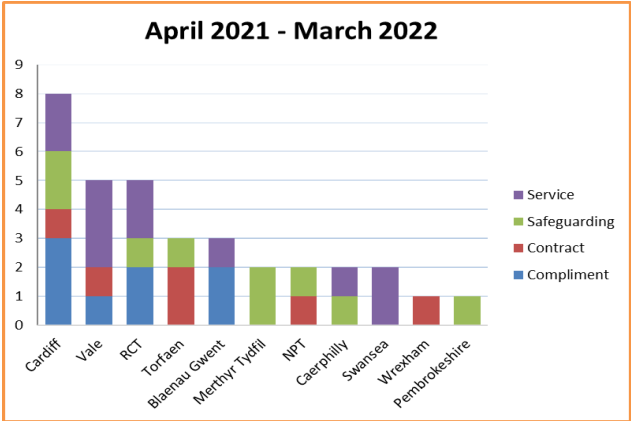
Overall capacity in Wales increased between 2016 – 2021 but hasn't kept pace with increased demand.

RCT is host to placements made by the following Local Authorities (16th 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.

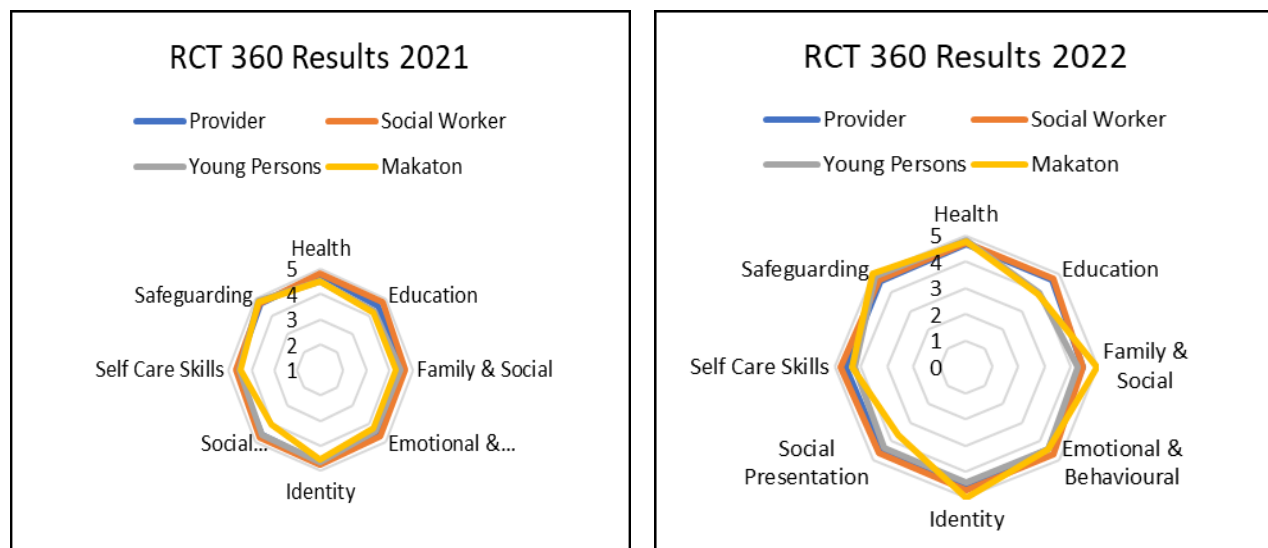
In the first 3 quarters of 2022/23 over 30 contracting monitoring visits have been completed with independent providers. Due to the lifting of Covid restrictions the number completed virtually has reduced significantly.

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.”

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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 5th 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.