



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26TH 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 1st 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:

Placement Type	15/10/2022	%
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%
Total	640	

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

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

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Background Papers

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