

Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2021-2024

Vision:

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.

Workforce strategy delivery aims:

- We will have 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

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

Children's Services Structure

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES										
Head of Community Wellbeing & Resilience		Head of Service Intensive Intervention				Head of Service Children Looked After (CLA)	Head of Service Edge of Care & Service Development	Head of Service Safeguarding	Head of Service Cwm Taf YOS	
Service Managers		Service Managers Intensive Intervention				Service Manager	Service Managers	Service Manager		
Children's Service Delivery	Resilient Families	Early Intervention	II West	II East	Disabled Children's Service	Children Looked After	Service Development	Safeguarding	Statutory and Preventative Services	
		IAA/MASH/ Enquiry & Assessment	1/2/3 & 16+	1/2/3 & 16+			0-11Yrs/ 11+Yrs/ Enablement	Miskin Services		

The figures below give an overview of the Children's Services workforce in 2020/ 2021:

- Children's Services has **603 full time equivalent posts**.
- Of the 603 (fte posts) **19% (114) are Social Worker positions**, 66.6% (76) of these Social Work posts are located within our Early Intervention - RFS/IAA/EAT (EI) and Intensive Intervention (II) service areas.
- There are **72 Senior Practitioners posts across Children's Services 12% of the workforce**, of which 60.4% (29) are located within our EI and II service areas.
- There are **32 Team Manager positions across Children's Services 5.3% of the total workforce**.
- 334 posts are Grade 10 and below, 55.3% of the total workforce
- Service Manager posts and above account for 3% of the total workforce.
- 5% other, casual posts etc.
- Children's Services' Early Intervention and Intensive Intervention service areas currently hold 30.5 Social Work/ Senior Practitioner vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of 29%.
This vacancy rate has remained consistently high at around 30% for a considerable period.
- During the 6 month period between April 2020 and September 2020, 8 Social Workers left the EI and II service areas, 50% (4) had been in post for less than a year. 7 of the 8 went to work in neighbouring Local Authorities.
- During the same 6 month period (April 2020 to September 2020), 8 Social Workers were appointed to the service areas. Therefore, there was no overall improvement in staffing levels and the vacancy rate remained high.

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.

Other considerations:

- Increasing pressure on services.
The Children's Services Management Information Data Report 3.2.2021 records an increase of 6.1% in the number of contacts received by Children's Services in the current year (February 2020- January 2021) when compared to the previous year (2019-2020). Safeguarding activity has also increased by 14.5% during the same period. It is anticipated that the demand for services will continue with increased demand a concern as we emerge from the Covid 19 pandemic.

How to ensure we have the workforce we need

Our Values are at the heart of everything we do and underpin what we want to achieve in our practice. In RCT Children's Services we strive to be:

- *Child Centred*: To focus on the experiences, progress and outcomes of the child or young person on their journey through our early intervention, social work and safeguarding systems.
- *Participative*: To work *with* practitioners, consult and involve them in decisions that affect their futures, working collaboratively to find solutions to the challenges we face.
- *Outcomes Based and Qualitative*: Our ambition is to continually seek to improve performance and demonstrate the impact of help for children and their families in improving their outcomes.
- *Positive*: Promote a positive approach which encourages improvement and the development of staff and services.
- *Reflective*: To promote reflective practice and shared learning.

The seven themes noted below have been highlighted in the Healthier Wales: Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales 2020-2030, as key to delivering a successful workforce strategy.

We want to transform our offer and take opportunities where they present across the Council and in Children and Adult Services.

RCT Children’s Services Workforce Plan	
Theme	What needs to be done
An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce an annual survey, to monitor and measure practitioner experience. • Development of a practitioner forum. • Ensure exit interviews are conducted and feedback collated. • Staff have access to resources that support/ develop their emotional and physical resilience e.g., Occupational health resources including counselling, physiotherapy etc. • Ensure practitioners have the physical resources they need to do their job effectively e.g., IT, appropriate workplaces. • Finalise a set of workforce well-being and engagement measures in the performance framework. (Linked to our Quality Assurance Framework). • Reasonable caseloads that allow for a healthy work life balance.
Attraction and recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance our attraction campaign, pulling together our media presence, highlight opportunities to celebrate. • Develop a pay structure that reflects qualifications, responsibilities and the ability to take on more complex /challenging work. • Maintain standardisation of roles and responsibilities, ensure clarity in the expectations of roles. • Develop a strong RCT offer (which could include clarity in relation to supervision practice, clear roles/responsibilities for all Children’s Services staff including business support, focus on well-being). • Review the ‘Scheme of delegation’ to make changes where appropriate to further the decision making autonomy of social workers.

Seamless Workforce Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCT'S Model of Social Work Practice. A strength based, outcome focused approach.
Digitally Developing Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an agile working environment across Children's Services that optimises the way we work. This includes access to suitable office accommodation to enable social connectivity and peer support. We should also ensure that practitioners have easy access to the physical resources they need to do their work effectively. E.g., office spaces that support agile working, with easy access to physical resources when required, e.g., desk booking mechanisms, meeting rooms (including supervision) and photocopying etc. • Invest in IT systems that support connectivity. • Ensure digital developments are supported by training that is focused on enhancing practitioners' digital literacy and confidence.
Excellent, training and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Care Workforce Team to develop action-learning groups for Social Workers and Senior Practitioners to create a forum and recognisable sub-group of peers with whom to share and learn. • Develop a buddy system, where new appointments (into SW, SP and TM) are "buddied" with a peer for the duration of their time in the team. • To promote learning and development opportunities across the service, including secondment.
Leadership and succession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop clearly defined career paths and development plans within Children's Services that support staff to prepare for the next role in their career progression. (Consider if there is a greater role for Consultant Social Workers across the service.) • Visible and approachable management team.
Workforce supply and shape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop robust workforce planning mechanisms that capture and utilise data to inform future recruitment and retention strategies to ensure a sustainable Children's Services' workforce. • Increasing the number of sponsored students and students on work placement. 'Grow our own' approach. • Revisit our attraction and advertising strategy.

What will success look like?

- High levels of staff engagement, motivation, well-being and satisfaction.
- Better recruitment and retention of staff through attractive and flexible working arrangements and career opportunities.
Reduction in use of agency workers.
- Flexible education opportunities and career development.
- We will track the following measures as part of our implementation of this strategy:
 - Numbers of leavers
 - Themes in exits surveys
 - Numbers of new appointees
 - Vacancy rate
 - Agency use rate
 - Staffing Budget

Next steps

- Establish a steering group to implement and monitor the action plan.
- Ensure link to the Service Improvement Plan and RCT Next Steps.
- Produce an Annual Report.

References

Healthier Wales: Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales 2020-2030
<https://heiw.nhs.wales/files/workforce-strategy-for-health-and-social-care1/>

RCT Workforce Plan 2017-2022
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/WorkforcePlan/RelatedDocuments/WorkforcePlan20172022.pdf>

Code of Practice for Social Care Employers: Social Care Wales 2018