

Children’s Services Risk Management Plan

This risk management plan has been developed to manage and reduce the risks posed by Children’s Services’ strategic priorities, including the Workforce Strategy and the Residential Transformation Strategy. This list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Our Controls

- **Managing priorities:** the right help, right time and right place strategy is in place to develop the service and our responses. Demand and key features of safe practice are monitored through Children Services Management Team via bi-monthly performance and quality assurance meetings.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** a workforce strategy and steering group has been established to address the wider issues in relation to attraction, skills, workforce planning, staff engagement and staff well-being.
- **Developing Foster Carers and Registered Children’s Homes that meet need:** the Children’s Services Residential Transformation Strategy that outlines plans to develop Foster Carers, not for profit children’s homes and accommodation for care leavers close to home and work towards placement sufficiency over the next 3-5 years.
- **Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy:** a Looked After Prevention Strategy is in place to ensure that the service provides and keeps under review the evidence-based services to prevent avoidable entries to the looked after system.

Identified Risk	Management of Risk	Risk Score		Risk Owner
Workforce				
1. At a time where it is very difficult to recruit and retain staff within the sector, there is the risk that there will not be sufficient staff to implement both the Workforce Strategy and Residential Transformation Strategy successfully. If the service is required to use agency staff to supplement current staffing concerns within Children’s Services, then there will be a negative financial impact for the Council. Using agency staff will carry a greater cost than employing more staff. Also, quality of	Workforce Strategy is focused on driving recruitment and retention within the workforce to alleviate staffing pressures, through a range of mechanisms. Apprenticeship schemes along with ‘grow our own’ schemes will be utilised to recruit staff across Children’s Services. SCWD staff are alert to the growing developments and involved as members of the steering group.	Likelihood Impact Score	4 3 12	Children’s Services Director reporting to Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.

<p>care and practice may be negatively affected in all settings by the difficulty in staffing.</p>	<p>Quarterly quality of care reports to the Corporate Parenting Board by residential managers.</p> <p>Develop regular reporting alongside HR and Finance to inform level of financial risk and priority tasks to manage and reduce risk.</p>			
<p>2. Competition between LAs for qualified Children’s Services practitioners is having a destabilising effect. This will be exacerbated if new residential settings are developed in other nearby LAs because of the Eliminate Profit Agenda.</p> <p>The current vacancy rate at 20/08/2024 is 22.5% for Children’s Services staff, and 37.4% for Social Work staff specifically.</p>	<p>Workforce Strategy targeted recruitment campaigns across Children’s Services e.g., Residential, II, DCT, are focussing on driving recruitment and retention within the workforce to aim to reduce vacancy levels.</p> <p>Develop regular reporting alongside HR and Finance to inform level of risk including financial risk, and priority tasks to manage and reduce risk.</p> <p>Regional working has commenced in order to seek to avoid conflicting attraction campaigns.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>3 3 9</p>	<p>Children’s Services Director reporting to Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.</p>
<p>3. If the qualified social work capacity is reduced, then there is a risk that services to vulnerable children are compromised.</p>	<p>Performance data systems are in place and reviewed regularly with a view to providing early alert of exceptions to standard practice.</p> <p>Systems in place for sharing information and responding to new concerns are prioritised.</p> <p>Intensive Intervention Prevention Plan (Phase 2) is being taken forward.</p> <p>Heads of Service to continue to monitor the safety of arrangements for any unallocated cases, updating at weekly, meeting, and alerting service director as per.</p> <p>Safeguarding partners are kept informed.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>4 5 20</p>	<p>Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.</p>

<p>4. Retention and recruitment may also be negatively impacted by the terms and conditions of work.</p>	<p>A Workforce Wellbeing group has been established to look at what can be offered to practitioners to improve recruitment and retention. This group reports to the Children's Services Workforce Strategy Steering Group.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>3 3 9</p>	<p>Children's Services Director reporting to Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.</p>
<p>5. Capacity is further reduced because agency provider cannot supply suitable social workers at the agreed hourly rate, leading to a risk of unallocated cases.</p>	<p>Looking at other ways to create capacity, such as recruiting to support posts (ACM CCSW). We have expanded our ACM and CCSW posts within II and are now pending the implementation of phase 2 of the II Prevention Plan</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>4 3 12</p>	<p>Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.</p>
<p>6. Higher caseloads and the impact of vacancies and temporary/agency staff have an impact on staff well-being and retention.</p> <p>The current vacancy rate is at 20/08/2024 22.5% for Children's Services staff, and 37.4% for Social Work staff specifically.</p>	<p>Intensive Intervention Prevention Plan (Phase 2) is being taken forward.</p> <p>Support systems are in place e.g. – regular 1:1 and team meetings.</p> <p>A range of emotional well-being services are available for Council employees.</p> <p>Piloting an enhanced flexi scheme within Intensive Intervention and Enquiry and Assessment Teams to commence September 2024.</p> <p>A new Model of Practice has been agreed for Children's Services and training and implementation will commence in November 2024.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>3 3 9</p>	<p>Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.</p>

	<p>Psychology-led structured supervision has commenced. Reflective spaces are now embedded within Intensive Intervention and are being expanded to other areas of the service.</p> <p>Detailed exit interview reporting is in place. The Practitioner Forum has been established and meets quarterly.</p> <p>We have an embedded the Communication Cycle, which includes a quarterly Service Update, Inform and Involve sessions, and exit and retention interviews.</p> <p>New induction resources have been developed for Children’s Services staff to support those joining the service, to be placed on The Source.</p> <p>A Business Support operation steering group has been established to look at utilising current Business Support resource within teams as effectively as possible.</p>			
<p>7. Current office accommodation arrangements are negatively impacting staff morale and are affecting retention. There are teams within Children’s Services that do not currently have a permanent base. If this continues, there is the risk that more staff will leave the service.</p>	<p>A workforce strategy retention sub-group has been established to focus on developing opportunities that address areas for retention improvements, including office space.</p> <p>Work has commenced on involving Children’s Services in the re-design of Cynon Principal Office for Intensive Intervention East.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>3 3 9</p>	<p>Senior Leadership Team/Director of Workforce.</p>

<p>8. At a time where it is very difficult to recruit and retain inhouse foster carers, there is a risk that the needs of children looked after may not be met locally. There has been a reduction in the number of inhouse foster carers, from 137 in 2020 to 134 in 2023, and a reduction of inhouse foster placements from 217 to 209. If this trend of losses continues, there is a risk that children looked after may not be placed within RCT.</p>	<p>The Foster Wales Recruitment & Retention Strategy (2022-25) has begun to be implemented, which illustrates our approach to improving the sufficiency of inhouse foster carers, to meet the needs of children looked after locally.</p> <p>Children's Services Transformation Board is considering the business case</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>2 4 8</p>	<p>Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services.</p>
<p>Residential/Accommodation Risks</p>				
<p>9. If further residential settings need to be developed due to the Residential Transformation Strategy, then we might face barriers from the local community when choosing where to place children and young people.</p>	<p>Considering the location of new residential settings carefully and collaborate with elected members to ease community tensions.</p> <p>Residential videos have been developed to show elected members, to provide a young person's point of view as to why staying in their local community is so important. These videos form part of the information provision to elected members.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>4 2 8</p>	<p>Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services.</p>
<p>10. If the Residential Transformation Strategy, and the Foster Wales Recruitment and Retention Strategy is not implemented effectively, then there is an increasing risk that CLA could experience placements that do not best meet their needs.</p>	<p>The needs of looked after children will be met as early as possible, and support to prevent escalation of need to residential, and prevent placement breakdown will be sought via the Therapy Panel. A Placement Panel meets weekly to review the needs of children and young people.</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact Score</p>	<p>1 4 4</p>	<p>Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services and Corporate Parenting Board</p>
<p>11. If there is disorderly exit from the market of existing providers leading up to 2026 re-</p>	<p>Government is in consultation as part of the legislative process, and strong representation has</p>	<p>Likelihood Impact</p>	<p>4 2</p>	<p>Children's Services</p>

registration deadline, then children's placements could be disrupted.	been made to adjust timescales and clarify the future not for profit model. There is a request to reconsider the 2026 deadline in favour of a period of re-balance to allow Councils and providers to re-shape services.	Score	8	Director reporting to Director of Social Services.
12. If greater provisions for CLA are being developed in RCT, then there will need to be an increase in provisions for 16+ young people to support a move through to supported independence. If there is a lack of 16+ provision available, young people leaving care could face a greater risk of homelessness.	A Care Leaver Accommodation Strategy is in place and a steering group established to try to address these concerns and ensure the sufficiency of accommodation to support an increase in young people leaving care needing support.	Likelihood Impact Score	2 3 6	Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services and Corporate Parenting Board
13. There has been an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) who have entered our care via the National Transfer Scheme. Home Office funding is not sufficient to meet the costs of placements for these young people, posing financial risks to the local authority. The net cost to Children's Services for UASC CLA placements is estimated to be £8,344 per week or £435,080 for the full year, as of August 2024.	Work is underway both on a regional level and on a LA level to look at alternative accommodation provisions to meet the needs of UASC young people, while also considering the current funding received. Work is underway on a regional basis with the support of the WLGA to challenge the disparity.	Likelihood Impact Score	3 3 9	Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services.
14. There have been difficulties in increasing the number of inhouse foster carers. There has been a reduction in the number of inhouse foster carers, from 137 in 2020 to 134 in 2023, and a reduction of inhouse foster placements from 217 to 209. If this trend of losses continues, there is a risk that CLA could	The Foster Wales Recruitment & Retention Strategy (2022-25) has begun to be implemented, which illustrates our approach to improving the sufficiency of inhouse foster carers, to meet the needs of children looked after locally.	Likelihood Impact Score	2 4 8	Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services.

experience placements that are not local, and do not best meet their needs.				
Risks to Partners' Services				
15. If there are a greater number of residential settings in RCT as a result of the strategy, then services such as Schools, Education and CAHMS will be under greater pressure and may not be able to provide services to all that need them.	By working in a multi-agency way, via the Residential Strategy Steering group, we can make these services aware of the need to prepare related services. The virtual school management meeting has developed measures that will inform the Council's ability to monitor and respond to this.	Likelihood Impact Score	3 3 9	Director of Education University Health Board
16. We will be working with partners to deliver services differently at the front door. As a response to the ongoing increasing level of demand at the front door the Right Help, Right Time, Right Place strategy will be working with partners differently.	Right Help, Right Time, Right Place multi-agency working has commenced. The development of the new Children's Services web pages on the Council website will help to mitigate risk by providing a wealth of information to families, what they can expect from Children's Services and support services they can access.	Likelihood Impact Score	2 3 6	Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services.
Market Stability and Regulatory Duties				
17. The provider market is unstable, and the Council is relying on Operating Without Registration (OWR) arrangements which are unlawful and carry a risk of prosecution.	An OWR protocol has been developed in order to manage the risks associated and ensure the Council exits these arrangements. IPC have undertaken a w review of our OWR arrangements that has provided assurance.	Likelihood Impact Score	2 3 6	Children's Services Director reporting to Director of Social Services.
18. If there is great upheaval due to the not-for-profit agenda, then there is the risk that	4C's will be working with these private partners to stabilise the market and reduce the pressure on these relationships.	Likelihood Impact Score	3 2 6	Children's Services Director

pressure could be placed on existing relationships with partners.				reporting to Director of Social Services and Corporate Parenting Board
Economic				
19. If new residential settings are to be developed, then funding needs to be approved and secured to successfully carry it out. Funding from external sources like the Regional Partnership Board is not guaranteed, and so failing to secure funding for these new provisions would mean there would be insufficient residential placements for CLA returning from out of county. If the £17.1 million funding proposal to Welsh Government under the Eliminate and Change funding is not granted, then the Residential Transformation Strategy will not be able to be carried out fully, as this funding covers the likely capital and revenue costs over 3 years.	<p>Capital grant under the Housing with Care fund via the Regional Partnership Board, has been granted to support the purchase and refurbishment of various new provisions, including Willowford House, Cartref Melys, and Ystrad Fechan.</p> <p>An Estates and Finance subgroup has also been established, and a business case format for each individual setting and investment has been agreed.</p> <p>Eliminate and Change grants have been made available for 3 years, FY22/23 until FY24/25.</p> <p>A meeting has taken place with Welsh Government who will provide an information in January 2025.</p>	Likelihood Impact Score	2 3 6	Finance Director
20. If the current budget constraints within the Council continue, then it will be difficult to secure the revenue costs to staff the provisions created as a result of the strategy.	<p>Independent Sector placements continue to be the biggest expenditure in terms of placements, and so increasing placements within RCT could have the potential to decrease overall revenue costs.</p> <p>However, this is not a risk that can be mitigated by Children's Services alone. This will need to be part of the wider Council's decision-making processes.</p>	Likelihood Impact Score	3 4 12	Finance Director

Legal				
21. If Children's Services fails at its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, and CLA become homeless, or suffer negative consequences, then the Council could face legal action.	The residential strategy/ care leaver accommodation and support strategy will see Children's Services carrying out its Corporate Parenting responsibilities towards CLA.	Likelihood Impact Score	1 4 4	Senior Leadership Team.
22. If there are any settings found to be operating without registration, then the Council is at risk of prosecution.	The residential strategy will see the increase of in-house provision to meet the need and match the statutory sufficiency duty, to decrease the likelihood of an 'OWR' setting.	Likelihood Impact Score	1 4 4	Senior Leadership Team.
Other Risks				
23. If new residential settings are built as part of the Residential Transformation Strategy, then they must have a neutral environmental impact, to avoid the Council facing financial penalties.	Building will be developed in accordance with the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero public sector.	Likelihood Impact Score	1 4 4	Senior Leadership Team.
24. If more in-house provision is acquired due to the Residential Transformation Strategy, then more pressure will be put on Estates, as they will have a greater number of properties to maintain.	An Estates and Finances subgroup has been established to discuss individual settings. This will keep Estates informed of any new settings that are acquired, to reduce the pressure.	Likelihood Impact Score	3 2 6	Senior Leadership Team.
25. If more in-house provision is acquired due to the Residential Transformation Strategy, then there will be greater pressure on Finance to monitor each of these provisions.	An Estates and Finances subgroup has been established to discuss individual settings. This will keep Finance informed of any new settings that are acquired, and a business case format for each individual setting and investment has been agreed.	Likelihood Impact Score	3 2 6	Senior Leadership Team.