

**Vale of Glamorgan Council
Children and Young People Services
Annual Placement Review**

July 2018

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline the actions taken within Children and Young People Services during 2017/18 with regard to placement provision for Children Looked After (CLA) and to outline our plans for 2018/19. Given this report is being presented to Scrutiny Committee in September 2018, figures up to the end of July 2018 have been included to support the currency of the report.

2. Context

This area of activity and expenditure is a very challenging and often volatile one in all local authorities. It is difficult to anticipate a number of key factors including:

- how many and which children will become looked after each year;
- what type of placements they will need; and
- how many children will cease to be looked after;
- the impact of case law and changes in government regulations.

To plan as effectively as possible, the Management Team in Children and Young People Services continuously analyse external and internal influences to anticipate the likely impact in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Some of the high profile external influences pertinent to this area are as follows:

- **Children with Complex Needs**

In common with other local authorities, the Vale of Glamorgan has experienced an increase in the number of children with especially complex needs and the rising costs associated with meeting these needs within appropriate placements continues to place pressure on budgets. This cohort of children relates both to those with challenging and complex behaviour and to those with disabilities.

Children and young people with challenging and complex behaviours often cannot be maintained within foster placements and require admission into residential care. In certain circumstances these placements will be specialist (for example, where a child is displaying sexually harmful behaviour) and/or

require the provision of additional staffing to manage risks associated with the child's behaviour. Placements of this type can cost over £250k a year.

There is evidence of increasing demand for support for older disabled children and young people. Families often manage to cope when children are younger but some of them find it increasingly difficult to do so as the children grow and may become more challenging or aggressive. Some disabled young people require 24 hour care and support which can be met only in a residential school setting, usually until they reach the age of 19. This represents a significant long-term pressure on resources in coming years as the average annual cost of such provision is on average £113,000 per year (range from £18,500 – £250,000 per year).

- **The Welsh Government's 'When I Am Ready' scheme**

The 'When I Am Ready – Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers' scheme aims to promote better support by extending a young person's transition to adulthood within a supportive family and household environment. Young people are now able to remain with their foster carer beyond the age of 18 until their 21st birthday, or until they feel able to leave for independent living before that age. The scheme was implemented in April 2016 and as of the 31st March 2018 we have 15 young people in 'When I Am Ready' placements with a potential further three identified for this financial year. This scheme will continue to have an impact upon the Fostering Service as children remain in placements for longer. This will increase the overall demand for foster care placements, to provide for the same number of children looked after. The Council will also have to address the need to recruit and retain foster carers who are capable and authorised to foster children from birth to the age of 21.

- **Remand Placements**

Following the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, local authorities became responsible for the costs of young people under the age of 18 who are remanded into Young Offenders Institutions (YOI), Secure Children's Homes (SCH) and Secure Training Centres (STC). Before April 2013, the Ministry of Justice paid for all YOI remands and two thirds of SCH and STC remands. The costs of a remand placement are £158 per night for a YOI, £561 per night for a SCH and £533 per night for a STC. If a young person is considered vulnerable, it is most likely they will be remanded to a SCH or STC. It is difficult for us to predict how many young people may be remanded into custody or for how long.

3. Aim and Objectives

Approved by Cabinet on the 5th September 2016, the Corporate Strategy for Children in Need of Care and Support identifies how the social care needs of children, young people and their families will be met within the resources available to the Council during the period 2016 to 2019.

The scope of this strategy covers four key objectives. These are:

- a. To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after, by ensuring a focus on early intervention and preventative action across all service provision for children.
- b. To manage risk confidently and provide support at the 'edge of care' by making sure that need is accurately assessed, resulting in the right children being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.
- c. To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements that meet the diverse range of children's needs.
- d. To give children clearly planned journeys through care which remain focused on achieving care plans, prevent drift, enable them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable placements and exit the care system positively.

These objectives are underpinned by the following key principles:

- i) The responsibility for meeting the needs of children and young people looked after or at risk of becoming looked after rests across all services for children, including statutory and independent providers.
- ii) The majority of children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.
- iii) Preventative services and early intervention to support children in need and their families should be provided to give them every chance to stay together.
- iv) Where children cannot be supported within their immediate family, families will be supported to make private arrangements within their wider family and friendship networks and, where necessary, to make these arrangements permanent through the use of Residence Orders and Special Guardianship Orders
- v) Formal kinship fostering arrangements will be explored as the preferred alternative arrangement where it is necessary for the local authority to

share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children.

- vi) Where a child's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements described in principles iv and v, the majority will have their needs met best in a substitute family, preferably with in-house foster carers and, if not, with Independent Fostering Agency carers wherever possible living within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- vii) Residential care placements will be made only where the complexity and challenge of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting or where a young person is subject to a Court Ordered Secure Remand.
- viii) Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
- ix) Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child/young person's needs. It is the role of the Placement Panel to agree that a child should become looked after and consider the most appropriate type of placement to meet these needs, with due consideration given to the available resources.
- x) All children looked after of statutory school age should receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Providing appropriate support to enable engagement in education is just as important as finding suitable care placements for Children Looked After.
- xi) Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, training, and where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

The overall objectives for residential care are:

- To reduce the population of children looked after where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- To make residential care placements only where it is necessary to do so, by making use of other forms of accommodation wherever possible.
- To ensure that all residential placements are time limited.
- To maximise the use of locally provided residential care where this type of accommodation is necessary.

4. Placement Profile

- Activity Update

The following table provides information about the number and nature of placements on a quarterly basis during 2017/18 and up to and including July 2018:

| Quarter Starting | Total LAC | Residential Care | Internally Provided Foster Care | Friends and Family Foster Care | Externally Provided Foster Care | Other |
|------------------|-----------|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Mar -17 | 224 | 13 | 67 | 93 57 kinship 36 PWP | 39 | 12 6 adoption 4 hostel/independent living 1 secure 1 NHS establishment |
| Jun-17 | 233 | 14 | 76 | 93 57 kinship 36 pwp | 41 | 9 4 adoption 4 Hostel/independent living 1 other |
| Oct-17 | 228 | 13 | 73 | 99 63 kinship 36 pwp | 35 | 8 2 adoption 5 hostels/ independent living 1 other |
| Dec-17 | 235 | 13 | 74 | 103 61 kinship 42 pwp | 33 | 12 4 adoption 7 hostels/ independent living 1 other |
| Mar-18 | 244 | 13 | 78 | 110 65 kinship 45 pwp | 33 | 10 3 adoption 6 hostels/independent living 1 secure unit |
| Jul-18 | 249 | 13 | 78 | 120 72 kinship 48 pwp | 33 | 5 2 adoption 2 hostels/independent living 1 secure unit |

- (1). Friends and Family Foster Care (also known as Kinship Care) refers to circumstances where a family friend or relative has come forward and offered to care for a child looked after, and they have undergone rigorous checks and an assessment of their suitability to do so. The friends or relatives are approved as foster carers via the Local Authority Fostering Panel. We can see from the table above and previous figures that there has been a significant increase in kinship care from 29 in March 2015, to 44 in March 2016, to 57 in March 2017, to 65 in March 18 and this trend is continuing with 72 kinship carers as at 27th July 18.
- (2) Placement with Parents refers to circumstances where a child looked after subject of a Care Order is placed with one or both parents with a degree of delegation of parental responsibility for decisions about the day to day care of the child, whilst parental responsibility is shared with

the Local Authority to ensure the child's welfare and safety. These arrangements are subject to checks and formal placement agreements, and are sanctioned by the Court and the Local Authority. There has been an increase in Placement with Parents from 13 in March 2015, to 24 in March 2016, to 36 in March 2017, to 45 in March 18 and this trend is continuing with 48 as at 27th July 18.

The population of children looked after reduced significantly between April 2011 and April 2013 with a 12% drop. Between April 2013 and March 2016 the population remained relatively stable at between 180 - 200 children/young people with some variation throughout the years. The population over the past two years has steadily increased from 193 in March 2016 to 249 at the end of July 2018, an increase of 56, with the largest increase seen in family and friends placements. This reflects a national upward trend in kinship placements where children placed with family and friends and subject to an Order of the Court require the approval of family and friends as foster carers. Although the Order defines the child as looked after by the Local Authority, and overall the rise in kinship placements has contributed significantly to the overall increase in the number of children looked after, it is important to acknowledge that these arrangements enable to child to remain within their wider family.

The table below provides data on the actual numbers of children looked after in neighbouring authorities over the last five years.

| | Cardiff | Merthyr Tydfil | Rhondda Cynon Taff | Vale of Glamorgan |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| LAC @ 31.3.18 | 830 | 156 | 676 | 244 |
| LAC @ 31.3.17 | 720 | 145 | 690 | 224 |
| LAC @ 31.3.16 | 645 | 140 | 625 | 193 |
| LAC @ 31.3.15 | 650 | 165 | 620 | 190 |
| LAC @ 31.3.14 | 610 | 175 | 650 | 185 |
| LAC @ 31.3.13 | 557 | 181 | 621 | 184 |

The majority of children looked after in the Vale of Glamorgan are in foster care provided by in-house carers and family and friends (kinship carers). Breakdown of the children looked after population confirms the Council's strategy to return children to placements within Wales and, where possible, within the boundary of the Vale of Glamorgan. Of the five children who currently remain out of Wales, one is placed with relatives, one is in a specialist residential school, two are in residential care homes and one is in a secure unit. It is hoped two young people can be returned to the area once appropriate accommodation is identified. These planned changes can have an impact on the percentage of children who have three or more placements in a year and this figure has increased slightly from 9% to 12% for the last year.

There has been a decrease in the number of children placed in externally provided foster care from 39 in 2016/17 to 33 in 2017/18. This continues to be a target for reduction in future years.

The number of children requiring residential care remained stable during 2017/18. There were on average 13 children whose additional complex needs required this type of provision during the year. This level of usage in respect of residential care reflects the success within the Division in reducing the numbers in residential care from 23 in March 2014 to 13 in March 2018. We are however aware of the increasing complexity of need amongst the children we are currently supporting, which has seen a rise in the numbers in residential care to 14 in the first quarter of 2017/18. In addition to this we have seen an increase in the numbers of young people remanded via criminal proceedings during the last quarter of 2017/18 and first quarter of 2018/19. Within the current cohort there is a young person who has been subject to a Secure Order for the past nine months and is placed in a specialist secure unit costing £9,065 per week.

The following case studies illustrate the type and level of need with which the Service is working.

Case study 1, 14 year old male

This young person became looked after in May 2016 due to his complex and challenging behaviour. His behaviour quickly became too challenging to be managed within foster care and he was excluded from mainstream school. He was placed in a local residential provision but his behaviour continued to deteriorate. His offending behaviour escalated and he was further excluded from the pupil referral unit. He was then placed in a specialist residential school out of area at a cost of £213,200 per year. However this placement only lasted for three months and with further concerns regarding his behaviour and the risks he posed to himself and others, the Local Authority applied for a Secure Order. He is now placed in a specialist secure unit costing £471,380 per year.

Case Study 2, 15 year old female

This young person's adoption placement broke down and she came into care two years ago. She has had a number of internal and external foster placements including solo placements. However, her attachment difficulties have resulted in her behaviour becoming too complex to be managed in foster care. She is placed in an out of county specialist residential home costing £221,000 per year.

Case Study 3, 7 year old female

This young person has been looked after by the Local Authority for two and a half years. She was placed with an internal foster carer but following her exclusion from school and her increasing complex behaviour the placement broke down. She was subsequently placed in a therapeutic foster placement, which also broke down. Unable to identify a foster placement to meet her current needs she is now placed in a specialist residential home costing £241,800 per year. It is planned to step this young person down into a foster placement once she has received the appropriate therapeutic support.

- **Placement Budget**

| <u>Placement Description</u> | <u>Budget 17/18</u> | <u>Actual Spend 17/18</u> | <u>Variance 17/18</u> | <u>Budget 18/19</u> |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Joint Budget - CLA Children's Residential Placements | 1,955 | 2,396 | -441 | 2,255 |
| Non CLA Children's Residential Placements | 25 | 67 | -42 | 25 |
| LA Joint Agreements - 4C's | 19 | 17 | +2 | 19 |
| Secure / Remand | 74 | 190 | -116 | 74 |
| Children's External Placement - IFA | 1,499 | 1,462 | +37 | 1,499 |
| | 3,572 | 4,132 | -560 | 3,872 |

The table above relates to the external placement budget and provides information regarding budget and actual spend. For 2017/18, the overall external placement budget for children looked after was overspent by £560k. This is a significant difference from previous years where in 2015/16 the budget was underspent by £183k and in 2016/17 underspent by £309k. This reflects the increasing costs of residential placements and the complexity of young people placed in residential care, rather than an increase in the number of young people placed in residential placements.

As previously stated, remand placements remain an unpredictable area. However, during the last year, we have had three children on remand in a secure unit for differing periods. The average costs of such placements can be in excess of £4,300 per week.

During 2017/18, five young people left residential care and five young people entered residential care. Of the five new young people requiring residential care, all had experienced a series of foster placements breakdowns.

As of July 2018, we have 13 young people in residential care at a projected cost of £2,501,870 for the year.

5. 2015/16 Activity Undertaken

During 2017/18, a number of initiatives have been implemented to address the key issues/objectives in this area.

External Placement Audit

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| Actions undertaken | An audit by the Multi-Agency Placement Panel of all children (47) placed externally in February 2018, either in residential care or with independent fostering agencies, with a remit to confirm suitability of placement and where alternative provisions may be appropriate. |
| Impact: Service | Two children identified to move into an internal foster placement. One step down parent and child placement from residential to IFA – subject to Court approval. Two children identified to step down from residential to foster placements. |
| Impact: Financial | <p>Potential savings if two children identified move to internal foster placement would be £1000 per week.</p> <p>Potential savings for parent and child step down placement to IFA would be £2000 per week.</p> <p>Potential saving if two children step down from residential to IFA foster placements would be £4800 per week.</p> |
| Lessons Learnt | <p>Outcomes from the Audit have been monitored via the Permanency Panel. The first progress report is due to be reported to Placement Panel in July 2018 and there will be an update every other month. The Multi-Agency Placement Panel has made a commitment to complete an external placement audit in February each year prior to commitment setting for the following financial year.</p> <p>Increasing the availability of lower cost placements within Wales and the Vale of Glamorgan, and matching children to these placements, where this is appropriate to meet their needs, have the potential to significantly reduce costs. These reductions, however, will only</p> |

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| | have an impact on the overall budget if we can successfully manage the number of new placements coming in, use alternatives to care where this is appropriate and maximise our use of internal resources where accommodation is required. |
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Internal Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy

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| Actions undertaken | <p>The Fostering Service has been implementing the Recruitment Strategy since 2013.</p> <p>During this time we have worked closely with Corporate Communications to increase advertising activity, including radio interviews, newspaper features and distribution of new leaflets and posters. We have implemented the Fostering Recruitment Best Practice Guide produced by the South East Wales Improvement Collaborative (SEWIC) and we are closely monitoring our performance against these standards. We are engaged in the National Fostering Framework which is one of the four major key work streams within the programme which has been established by the strategic steering group set up by Welsh Government with the task of improving outcomes for children. The aims of the National Fostering Framework (NFF) is to improve permanency planning for children and quality of placement provision, consistent use of best practice models for recruitment and supporting carers and an increase in collaboration and cooperation by all key stakeholders. During the past year we have worked regionally with Cardiff to produce a regional development plan and a joint fostering strategy, with the aim of increasing recruitment across the region.</p> |
| Impact: Service | <p>From 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, we have received 43 registrations of interest compared to 66 the previous year. We completed 20 initial visits to prospective applicants. We have provided regular pre-approval training for prospective applicants, with 25 people attending since April 2015, and we have received six applications for assessment during 2017/18.</p> <p>We have assessed and approved four new mainstream foster carers and are currently assessing a further five. We have approved seventeen new kinship carers. Therefore, whilst we did not meet our target of eight new mainstream carers, we significantly increased the numbers of kinship carers, supporting children to remain within their wider families.</p> |

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| Impact: Financial | The costs associated with internal and external foster care placements vary according to the needs of the individual looked after child. In addition, the skills of the foster carer and the number of children placed with them will cause the payment to internal foster carers to vary. However the cost differential between external and internal provision equates to £391.60 per week/£20,363 per annum per placement on average. Therefore, a reduction in our use of external placements by increasing our internal provision will provide savings. We plan to reduce external placements by two during 2018/19 resulting in a saving of £72k. |
| Lessons Learnt | Growth within the Fostering Service will support us to meet the demands of the looked after population in future years. We continue to work with the NFF and have developed our regional development plan and joint fostering strategy with Cardiff. |

Joint Budget

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| Actions undertaken | Establishment of a joint budget between Children and Young People Services and Learning and Skills to meet the education and social care costs of residential placements for children with highly complex needs who are looked after by the Council. It was endorsed by Cabinet as a pilot scheme for one year from 1 st July 2013 and a report recommending continuation was presented to Cabinet on 30 th June 2014 and approved. |
| Impact: Service | Prior to the joint budget, the process for determining the allocation of costs to each funder could be difficult and time consuming. These arrangements for agreeing contributions to the overall cost of specific placements did not assist effective planning for the children concerned. Under the new arrangements, where a child has been identified as being eligible for funding from the joint budget, all the costs of caring for the child and meeting their needs are charged to that budget. |
| Impact: Financial | The joint budget for 2017/18 was £1.9 million. The budget holder is the Head of Children and Young People Services, who takes responsibility for monitoring and reporting the position of the budget. The budget overspent during 2013/14 by £496,000. During 2014/15 the budget was underspend by £4,000. The budget for 2015/16 was underspent by £183,000 and the budget for 2016/17 was underspent by |

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|----------------|---|
| | £262,000. However, the budget for 2017/18 was over spent by £625,973 reflecting the increasing costs of specialist residential placements rather than an increase in children placed in residential provision. |
| Lessons Learnt | Establishment of the joint budget has been successful in removing the need to determine funding arrangements on an ad hoc basis. There is a need for rigorous management of the budget, to ensure there are no overspends. The relevant Directors and the Head of Finance will monitor the budget on a quarterly basis. |

Revocation of Care Orders

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| Actions undertaken | <p>In line with the children looked after recovery plan; a plan aimed at reducing the overall number of children looked after the Permanency Panel takes responsibility for reviewing all cases prior to their second review (i.e. within four months). The specific focus of the revocation work stream is to examine the potential for the discharge of Care Orders for children looked after to more appropriate/less intrusive Orders which still protect and safeguard the child's welfare.</p> <p>Three successful applications were made to Court to revoke Care Orders and institute Child Arrangement/Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) during 2017/18 in respect of four children.</p> |
| Impact: Service | These children are no longer looked after and they are able to lead more normal lives, without high levels of state intervention. Monthly statutory social work visits are no longer required, nor the statutory review of their cases by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), freeing staff capacity for other essential work. |
| Impact: Financial | <p>Two were approved as kinship carers prior to the granting of the SGO. For those in receipt of fostering allowance before the looked after status of the children ended, they are now in receipt of SGO allowances at the same rate, less child benefit payments which they are now entitled to claim directly. (Rates vary from £136-£170 per week according to the age of the child.)</p> <p>For the children who were previously looked after by an in-house foster carer this will equate to a saving of approximately £3500 -£4000 per annum.</p> <p>The most significant 'saving' is in qualified staff time,</p> |

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| | which is easily absorbed by existing and new demands for Social Services intervention with children and families assessed as in need of support. |
| Lessons Learnt | SGO applications are now given much more consideration as a means of achieving permanence for children unable to live with their birth families. This policy position will continue to be applied where it appropriately meets the needs of the child. |

The above actions describe how the Service is seeking to deliver overall objectives within this area of work. The result is more robust processes to manage a volatile area of demand and associated expenditure.

In the coming years, the Division will build on these actions (whilst maintaining and enhancing them) in order to continue to manage service demands.

6. Opportunities

The following opportunities have been identified based on the environmental analysis and in order to manage associated risks and issues:

In line with the overall objectives for this work stream, the following activities are underway:

- To reduce the use of independent fostering agencies for placements through the foster carer recruitment project which includes a target of eight newly recruited foster carers and a reduction of two independent foster placements during 2018/19.
- Minimise movement into residential care – limit the numbers coming in and the length of stay.
- Utilise local residential provision to return looked after to local lower cost residential placements where possible and appropriate.
- Continue to address the overall children looked after population with a particular focus on the increase in kinship placements, through the use of revocation of Care Orders and preventative services.
- Work in partnership with Health to offer increased therapeutic support to children looked after and foster carers to promote placement stability and prevent placements breaking down and leading to more costly placements.
- Development of the service structure to include a specific team for Children Looked After.

These actions will continue to involve the use of regional arrangements where appropriate, for example, working with the NFF, 4C's and other local authorities to secure affordable placement opportunities. The Service is also working within the Reshaping Services agenda and looking at ways of responding to challenges and opportunities presented by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. This work is underway and will continue to

consider new and innovative ways of working that align with the aims and objectives of the Reshaping Services agenda.

These activities will continue to be reported to elected members as part of existing reporting arrangements, including the monthly budget programme report and update reports regarding the Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support, and the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy.