

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

June 2014

0. Version Control

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline the actions taken within Children and Young People Services during 2013/14 with regard to placement provision for Looked After Children (LAC) and to outline our plans for 2014/15.

This report relates also to one of the key savings being managed as part of the Social Services Budget Programme (C5: LAC Residential Placements), with a target of £150,000 in cashable savings each year between 2014/15 and 2016/17.

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 enter the looked after system 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 to residential care. In certain circumstances these placements will be specialist (for example, where a child is displaying sexually abusive 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 £200k 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. It is proposed young people will be 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 is currently being tested through three pioneer sites before full implementation. This scheme will have an impact upon the fostering service as children remain in placements for longer. This will increase the overall demand for foster carer placements, to provide for the same number of Looked After Children. 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. Feedback from the pioneer sites confirms there are significant costs associated with introducing the scheme. The pioneer sites are in the process of concluding their work and making this available to Welsh Government. Issues of cost and the timing of implementation are key features.

- **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, £555 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, the Children and Young People Services Commissioning Strategy 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 2013 to 2018.

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 Looked After Children 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 Looked After Children.
- 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 looked after children population 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.

The aim of the associated work stream within the Budget Programme is to source alternative suppliers/provision for those looked after children requiring residential care.

4. Placement Profile

4.1 Activity Update

The following table provides information about the number and nature of placements on a monthly basis during 2013/14:

Quarter Starting	Total LAC	Residential Care	Internally Provided Foster Care	Friends and Family Foster Care	Externally Provided Foster Care	Other
Apr-13	184	23	75	45 31 kinship 18 PWP	30	11 4 adoption 5 Hostels 1 secure 1 friendly lod
May-13	186	23	77	45 40 kinship 26 PWP	29	12 2 adoption 9 Hostels 1 friendly lod

Jun-13	188	25	74	47 29 kinship 18 PWP	27	15 6 adoption 6 Hostels 2 secure 1 friendly lod
Jul-13	190	27	75	45 29 kinship 16 PWP	29	14 5 adoption 7 Hostels 2 secure
Aug-13	195	27	73	46 28 kinship 18 PWP	29	20 6 adoption 10 Hostels 3 secure 1 friendly lod
Sept-13	197	30	75	44 26 kinship 18 PWP	26	22 7 adoption 12 Hostels 2 secure 1 friendly lod
Oct-13	203	30	75	45 25 kinship 20 PWP	30	23 9 adoption 12 Hostels 1 secure 1 friendly lod
Nov-13	196	26	73	44 26 kinship 18 PWP	33	20 9 adoption 8 Hostels 2 secure 1 friendly lod
Dec-13	196	26	73	46 28 kinship 18 PWP	31	20 9 adoption 8 Hostels 2 secure 1 friendly lod
Jan-14	192	25	72	46 27 kinship 19 PWP	32	17 8 adoption 8 Hostels 1 NHS estab
Feb-14	192	25	71	46 28 kinship 18 PWP	30	20 9 adoption 9 Hostels 1 secure 1 NHS estab
Mar-14	184	24	69	45 28 kinship 17 PWP	29	17 9 adoption 5 Hostels 1 secure 1 NHS estab 1 B&B

(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 looked after child, 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.

(2) Placement with Parents refers to circumstances where a looked after child 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 or Local Authority.

The LAC population reduced significantly between April 2011 and April 2013 with a 12% drop. From April 2013 to April 2014, the population has remained relatively stable at 184 with some variation throughout the year. As of June 2014, the number of children looked after stood at 181.

The table below provides a comparison with the numbers of looked after children in neighbouring authorities.

	Cardiff	Merthyr Tydfil	Rhondda Cynon Taff	Vale of Glamorgan
LAC @ 31.3.13	557	181	621	184
LAC @ 31.3.12	568	192	594	219
LAC @ 31.3.11	521	167	553	198

The majority of looked after children in the Vale of Glamorgan are in foster care provided by in-house carers and family and friends (kinship carers). Breakdown of the LAC 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 eight children who currently remain out of Wales, three are placed with relatives, three in specialist placements, one in secure accommodation and one with local authority carers in another local authority pending conclusion of the care proceedings and transfer of the case. Although these planned changes can have an impact on the percentage of children who have three or more placements in a year, the rise in this figure experienced in 2012/13 has been reversed in 2013/14, reducing from 14% to 11%.

There has been a steady reduction in the number of children placed in externally provided foster care from 2011/12 to 2013/2014, with placements remaining stable during 2013/14. This continues to be a target for future years. The number of children requiring residential care has fluctuated this year. There are on average 27 children whose additional complex needs will require this type of provision. There are eight children within this cohort who have significant disabilities and their care packages will require funding until the age of eighteen. Throughout the year there has been at least one child in

secure accommodation, and for one month during the year there were three at the same time.

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

Case study 1, 15 year old male

This young person has been looked after by the local authority for four years. Initially placed in foster care, he began to display sexually inappropriate behaviours. Following a number of assessments, it was identified that this could pose a significant risk to others. An out of area, high cost, specialist, therapeutic residential placement was identified a year ago that could keep him and others safe and address the behaviours he displays. It is envisaged that he will need to remain in this placement for at least another year whilst work with him continues. The cost is £4100 per week (approximately £426,000 in total for two years).

Case Study 2, Sibling group of three

A sibling group of three boys became looked after in 2011. It was a priority to keep these brothers together as they had a very close bond. At that time, there were no in-house foster carers available to take a sibling group of three and so they were placed with an independent fostering agency (IFA) at a high cost to the authority of almost £100,000 per annum. Following care proceedings and an unsuccessful period of looking for adoptive placements, it is planned that their foster carers will apply for Special Guardianship Orders for the three boys to provide them with a sense of permanency and security throughout their childhood. This is a very positive outcome for the children and is estimated will save the authority approximately £45,000 per year.

Case Study 3, 21 year old female

This young person became looked after when she was 11 years old. She was placed initially with short term emergency carers before being matched with a long term and experienced in-house foster carer. The authority has supported her to remain with her foster carer whilst going on to study at university. This prevented us from using this carer for another child but it was clearly in this young person's best interests. This further three years cost £55,000 in total. The young person has now completed her studies and will be moving on to live independently.

4.2 Placement Budget

	Budget 2013/14 £000	Actual Spend 2013/14 £000	Budget 2014/15 £000
Joint Budget – Residential LAC	3,150	3,579	3,335
Residential Non LAC	117	108	38
IFA	979	977	851
Resolutions Foster Care	187	121	191
Remand	70	222	71
4Cs	9	16	19
TOTAL	4,512	5,023	4,505

The table above relates to the external placement budget and provides information regarding budget and actual spend. During 2013/14, the joint budget for looked after children placed in residential care was overspent by £429,000 and the secure/remand budget was overspent by £152,000.

As previously stated, remand placements remain an unpredictable area. During the last year, we have had at least one child on remand or in a secure unit each month; in August, there were three children in a secure setting at the same time. The average costs of such placements are in excess of £4,000 per week. As of June 2014, one young person is remanded to a secure children's home.

During 2013/14, five young people left residential care and six young people entered residential care. Of the six new young people requiring residential care, three had experienced a series of foster placements breakdowns; two came straight into residential care following challenging and offending behaviour which prevented them being placed in foster care, and one required a therapeutic residential school following an adoption breakdown. In addition to the new entries into residential care, two children already in residential care with complex disabilities required their care package to be increased, doubling their costs.

As of June 2014, we have 24 young people in residential care at a projected cost of £3,335,118 for the year.

5. 2013/14 Activity Undertaken

During 2013/14, a number of initiatives have been implemented to address the key issues/objectives in this area.

5.1 External Placement Audit

Actions undertaken	An audit by the Multi-Agency Placement Panel of all children (55) placed externally in November 2013, 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	Five children identified as having already moved to lower cost placements in Wales, two children being considered for moves to within Wales, seven children identified as potential moves to the new residential provision within the Vale of Glamorgan.
Impact: Financial	<p>Savings of £1704.20 per week were achieved from five children who had already moved to lower cost placements in Wales in 2012/13.</p> <p>A further saving of £418 per week was achieved in January 2014 when two children moved placements to within Wales from England.</p> <p>Potential savings if seven children identified for consideration are suitable for movement to the new residential provision.</p>
Lessons Learnt	<p>Outcomes from the audit have been monitored via the Permanency Panel. The first progress report was presented to Placement Panel in February 2014 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 January each year prior to commitment setting for the following financial year.</p> <p>Increasing the availability of lower cost placements within Wales 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 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.</p>

5.2 Internal Foster Carer Recruitment Project

<p>Actions undertaken</p>	<p>The Fostering Service has been implementing the Recruitment Strategy and a Recruitment Officer was appointed in July 2013 through secondment of an experienced social worker from within the Placements and Permanency Team.</p> <p>Beginning with Foster Carer Fortnight in May 2013, 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.</p>
<p>Impact: Service</p>	<p>From 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014, we have received 92 registrations of interest. This is a 61% increase on the total figure for last year. We have increased our initial visits to prospective applicants from 31 during 2012/13 to 49 for 2013/14.</p> <p>We have provided regular pre-approval training for prospective applicants, with 35 people attending since April 2013, and we have received 30 applications for assessment. We have assessed and approved eight new mainstream foster carers during the year. This has exceeded our recruitment strategy target of six and is the same as last year's figure. It is expected that the increase in fostering applications received during 2013/14 will see benefits in 2014/15 with 13 assessments already underway.</p>
<p>Impact: Financial</p>	<p>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 four during 2014/15 resulting in a saving of £81,452.</p>

Lessons Learnt	The cost benefits of having a resource dedicated to recruitment are already clear. This post is time limited to three years and we will need to consider whether this post is made permanent. The growth within the fostering service will allow us to meet the demands of the looked after population in future years. Alongside our own foster carer recruitment project, we continue to work with SEWIC looking at possible collaboration for regional marketing and recruitment.
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5.3 Joint Budget

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 will be presented to Cabinet on 30 th June recommending continuation.
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 2013/14 was £3.15 million. It was established by transferring the existing Learning and Skills expenditure of £320k with the remaining balance of £2,830k being transferred from Social Services. 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, with an agreement that this overspend be taken from Children and Young People Services and Learning and Skills budgets, based on a 90%/10% contribution.
Lessons Learnt	Establishment of the joint budget has been successful in removing the need to determine funding arrangements on an ad hoc basis. Review of the pilot scheme has proposed continuation of the arrangements. There is a need for more rigorous

	management of the budget, to avoid future overspends. The relevant Directors and the Head of Finance will monitor the budget on a quarterly basis.
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5.4 Revocation of Care Orders

Actions undertaken	<p>In line with the LAC recovery plan, the Permanency Panel takes responsibility for reviewing all cases prior to their second LAC 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 LAC to more appropriate /less intrusive Orders which still protect and safeguard the child's welfare.</p> <p>Seven successful applications were made to Court to revoke Care Orders and institute Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) during 2013/14 in respect of 13 children. Since April 2014, Residence Orders (RO) have been granted by the Court in respect of four children and Special Guardianship Orders in respect of a further two.</p>
Impact: Service	<p>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. The completion of the paperwork required to bring about a change in legal status is time consuming for the case manager.</p>
Impact: Financial	<p>Four were approved as kinship carers prior to the granting of the SGO, and two were mainstream foster carers prior to the granting of the SGO. For the six who were in receipt of fostering allowance before the LAC 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 £3670 -£3980 per annum.</p> <p>The most significant 'saving' is in qualified staff time, which is easily absorbed by existing and new demands for social services intervention with children and families assessed as in need of support.</p>

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.
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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

A saving of £150,000 per annum from 2014/15 – 2016/17 is required from the placement budget in Children and Young People Services. In order to deliver this saving, 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 workstream, the following activities are underway:

- To reduce the use of IFAs for placements through the foster carer recruitment project which includes a target of eight newly recruited foster carers and reduction of four independent foster placements during 2014/15.
- Minimise movement into residential care – limit the numbers coming in and the length of stay.
- Utilise the new residential provision to return LAC to local lower cost residential placements where possible and appropriate.
- Continue to address the overall LAC population through the use of revocation of Care Orders and preventative services.

These activities will continue to be reported to elected members as part of existing reporting arrangements, including the monthly budget programme report and six monthly reports on the Children and Young People's Services Commissioning Strategy and the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy.