

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017**

#### **ONGOING REVIEW OF PLACEMENT AND ACCOMMODATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER**

#### **REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR C LEYSHON**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the ongoing review of placement and accommodation provision for children who are looked after.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes and endorses the content of the report on the review of placement and accommodation provision for children who are looked after (attached as Appendix One).
- 2.2 Supports the recommendations set out in paragraph 5 of the report attached as Appendix One to this report.
- 2.3 Agree that Treherbert Children's Home no longer be utilised.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Over recent years RCT has placed a stronger emphasis on the importance of supporting families to be able to effectively care for and nurture their children so that children can remain within the family and/or with friends and not need to enter the care of the local authority. As part of the ongoing development of our placement and accommodation provision for children who are looked after an external review on progress was commissioned.

3.2 I am pleased to confirm that this review has noted the ongoing developments and new arrangements that have been introduced, including:

- Safe Arrangements for Care of Children (SACC)
- Children Looked After Quality Assurance Panel
- Remain, Repair and Reunify project
- MISKIN investment and expansion of capacity to support more children to remain within their family home or to return home following a short period of time in care
- An increase in the number of alternative arrangements such as Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) (from 175 in 2014/15 to 255 in 2016/17 with 47 new SGO's made in 2014/15 and 55 new SGO's made in 2015/16)
- Development of a When I'm Ready scheme (although numbers using the scheme remain low)
- Continually reviewing the commissioning mix with a specific focus on in-house and external residential provision to meet changing needs

3.3 In addition, there has been investment in strengthening capacity and quality within the mainstream foster care service which includes: increasing the number of in-house mainstream carers (including increasing numbers moving over from the independent sector); enhanced support for foster carers; enhanced training and development to further develop skills, knowledge and experience (in particular in relation to caring for teenagers); strengthened kinship care provision. Such investment contributes to placement stability for children and young people within family type placements. Evidence demonstrates that RCT is improving its ability to achieve this outcome.

3.4 The report also highlights that given the challenges to all providers in providing good quality residential care to the relatively small number of children for whom it best meets their needs, RCT needs to continue to focus its residential provision in a reduced number of high quality units. On the basis that the demand for residential care is reducing and has the potential to reduce further in the future no further in-house residential provision is required at this stage (in addition to what is currently available in Bryndar and Beddau). Whilst the changing age profile of children looked after may require ongoing review of the focus of provision in these two homes there is no evidence to suggest that Treherbert Home should be re-opened.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 In terms of our in-house provision the continuing pressures on Children's Services and experiences with Treherbert highlight the need to consider what types of residential establishments are needed in the

future to accommodate the complex needs of the young people who are becoming looked after.

- 4.2 The current situation and outcome of this review supports our direction of travel and in terms of our in-house provision notes the opportunity to re-focus on what is required, to meet changing service needs.
- 4.3 In September 2016 the decision was taken to cease operation at Treherbert in light of the number of incidents involving residents that occurred and the expected Non Compliance Notice issued by CSSIW after their Inspection in July 2016. Treherbert Children's home is referred to in the progress report (Appendix One) which highlights the success of the current alternative arrangements and confirms that there is no need to re-open this facility. The home has not been used as a children's home since it was closed in September 2016 and there has been no adverse impact on Children Looked after. Indeed staff have been temporarily redeployed within the service and our needs data does not support the need to re-open.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business officer.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Should we proceed with the recommended action in respect of Treherbert Home we will continue to work with HR to minimise impact on staff and re-deploy as necessary.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 7.1 There are no adverse financial implications associated with this report.
- 7.2 The recommendations set out in the independent review (Appendix one) support the Council's ongoing modernisation agenda for Social Services.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) requires very significant changes to the way social services are planned, designed, commissioned and delivered. The primary duties of this Act that impact on the future commissioning arrangements for children looked after include:

- promoting the upbringing of children within their family whenever it is safe to do so;
- consideration of a range of routes to permanence without the need for a child to become looked after by the local authority such as care provided by extended family and friends, particularly where such care can be supported by a legal order such as a child arrangement order or a special guardianship order (SGO);
- consideration of the most appropriate placement where it has not been possible to place a looked after child either with a parent or connected person which will include: foster care; adoption; residential provision; alternative arrangements (for example, supporting young people aged 16 or over to live independently in rented accommodation or in supported lodgings).

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 9.1 The provision of effective responses to the needs of children and young people is a key priority for the Council and is supported by the recommended course of action.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 To meet the needs of our Children looked after the focus within RCT has understandably been to strengthen our approach in relation to preventing children becoming looked after in the first instance. It is, however, important to ensure that an equally strong focus remains on those children and young people whose needs can only be met through the care of the local authority and aspirations for them must remain positive and strong.
- 10.2 There is a strong commitment to children looked after and care leavers within RCT, at both a local authority and regional level. This commitment is echoed in a number of strategies and plans all with stated aims and activities. In recent years RCT has placed a stronger emphasis on the importance of supporting families to be able to effectively care and nurture their children so that children can remain within the family and/or with friends and do not need to enter the care of the local authority.

### **Other Information:-**

#### ***Relevant Scrutiny Committee:***

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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COUNCILLOR C LEYSHON**

**Background Papers**

None

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**RCT Children's Services**

**Review and re-focus of the accommodation and placement provision  
for Children Looked After**

**Residential Care Report**

**Practice Solutions Ltd**

Author: Vicky Allen

Date: September 2017

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Children and Family Service commissioned Practice Solutions Limited (PSL) to support them in reviewing and refocusing their placement and accommodation provision for children who are looked after. The purpose is to ensure that the service is:
- innovative
  - sustainable
  - meets legislative requirements
  - co-produced
  - able to achieve the right outcomes for looked after children
  - cost effective
- 1.2 The project has been managed through a number of different phases and has involved information gathering and analysis, case file audits, a range of stakeholder engagement activities and the development of recommendations for the re-modelling of accommodation and placement services that can then be used by RCT to inform the development of an informed commissioning strategy.

## 2 National and local context for children's residential care

- 2.1 At a **national level** the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) requires very significant changes to the way social services are planned, designed, commissioned and delivered. The primary duties of this Act that impact on the future commissioning arrangements for children looked after include:
- promoting the upbringing of children within their family whenever it is safe to do so;
  - consideration of a range of routes to permanence without the need for a child to become looked after by the local authority such as care provided by extended family and friends, particularly where such care can be supported by a legal order such as a child arrangement order or a special guardianship order (SGO);
  - consideration of the most appropriate placement where it has not been possible to place a looked after child either with a parent or connected person which will include: foster care; adoption; residential provision; alternative arrangements (for example, supporting young people aged 16 or over to live independently in rented accommodation or in supported lodgings);
  - provision of accommodation within the local authority area that meets children's needs (to include . having a number and range of accommodation provision in the area capable of meeting different needs)
  - provision of a 'When I'm Ready' scheme
  - joint protocols (between Social services and housing departments) for the assessment and meeting of care leavers' accommodation needs.
- 2.2 Standard residential care placements are needed for children and young people who may present especially challenging or risky behaviours. They may have experienced several placement breakdowns or they may be running away, misusing substances or be at risk of child sexual exploitation. They need the additional level of supervision and support that can be provided in staffed residential care. Specialist residential placements are needed for disabled children and young people with extremely complex and challenging needs, with staff who are experienced in providing the care they need.
- 2.3 It is essential that any local authority has a clear understanding about the contribution that residential care can make as part of a range of placement options, within an overall placement strategy.



Residential care is a difficult enterprise for providers from any sector; done badly, a residential care home can become a dangerous place for children. There are considerable challenges involved in financing, staffing and managing homes, in maintaining good relationships with the community in which they are placed and with agencies such as schools and police upon which they often rely.

- 2.4 Clarity of purpose for residential care as a whole and for each individual establishment, managing demand; matching need and placement type and excellent direct work by well qualified and skilled staff are key. There needs to be a clear definition and understanding for local authorities, young people and their families about what is being offered, whether this is a safe home, the nature of therapeutic provision or education available. Excellent quality of care has to characterise every home.
- 2.5 Over the years, children’s homes have suffered from a perception of being a ‘last resort’ for young people in care, potentially dangerous, extremely expensive and offering little placement stability or positive outcomes. It has become known that some young people living in children’s homes are targeted by abusers from organised gangs, furthering the perception of homes as risky environments. However, as the Children’s Commissioner recently reported the picture is more mixed. <sup>1</sup>“What we hear far less often are the accounts of the everyday experiences of young people living in residential care. This includes young people who regard their children’s home as the place they want to be, with people who care for them. Many will be leading successful lives in their local communities, succeeding educationally, as volunteers and as members of community groups. Others may have more mixed experiences, face many challenges in their everyday lives and may wish they were living elsewhere.” Children’s homes have an important place in providing the right care for small numbers of young people in Wales but there are some real challenges that must be tackled. Also, any plans for residential care must consider the implications of the statutory framework for regulation of social care provision in children’s residential care setting in Wales which will come into force in April 2018 (phase two).
- 2.6 At a **local level** the review has been undertaken within the context of the Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent for Children Looked After (June 2016) which sets the following vision and principles:

*Table 1: Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent for Children Looked After (2016)*

Vision	Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people live safe, healthy and fulfilled lives, and are supported to achieve potential</li> <li>• Prioritising early intervention and prevention and working together to ensure fewer children become CLA</li> <li>• CLA to have positive experiences and achieve great outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and well-being</li> <li>• Voice</li> <li>• Early intervention and prevention</li> <li>• Outcome-focused</li> <li>• Family first</li> <li>• Closer to home</li> <li>• Stability collaboration</li> </ul>

- 2.7 Over recent years RCT has placed a stronger emphasis on the importance of supporting families to be able to effectively care for and nurture their children so that children can remain within the family and/or with friends and not need to enter the care of the local authority. Consequently, new arrangements have been introduced, including new arrangements which include:

<sup>1</sup> The Right Care: Children’s rights in residential care in Wales

- Safe Arrangements for Care of Children (SACC)<sup>2</sup>
- Children Looked After Quality Assurance Panel
- Remain, Repair and Reunify project
- MISKIN investment and expansion of capacity to support more children to remain within their family home or to return home following a short period of time in care
- An increase in the number of alternative arrangements such as Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) (with 47 new SGO's made in 2014/15 and 55 new SGO's made in 2015/16)
- Development of a When I'm Ready scheme (although numbers using the scheme remain low)
- Continually reviewing commissioning mix with a specific focus on in-house and external residential provision to meet changing needs

2.8 In addition, there has been investment in strengthening capacity and quality within the mainstream foster care service which includes: increasing the number of in-house mainstream carers (including increasing numbers moving over from the independent sector); enhanced support for foster carers; enhanced training and development to further develop skills, knowledge and experience (in particular in relation to caring for teenagers); strengthened kinship care provision. Such investment contributes to placement stability for children and young people within family type placements. Evidence demonstrate that RCT is improving its ability to achieve this outcome.

### 3 Children Looked After (CLA) Population Profile

#### Children in Need and Child Protection Profile

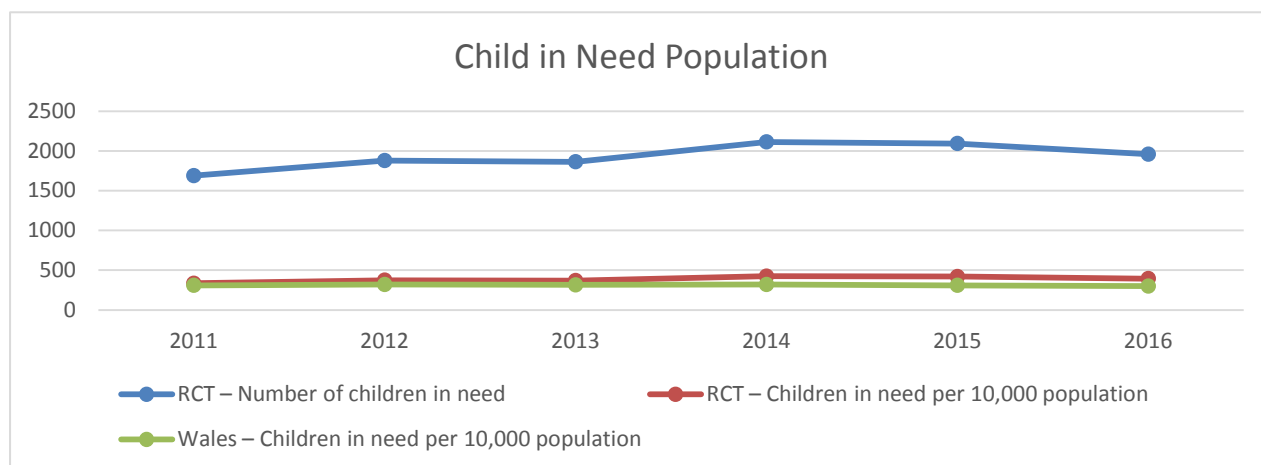
3.1 It is important to consider the activity into Children's Services in RCT, the profile of children in need and of children on the child protection register as these can provide an indication and projection of the future CLA population. In RCT there has been an increase in the number of children that have been referred and re-referred into RCT Children's Services Department over the past five years.

3.2 There has been an increase in the Child in Need population over the past six years from 1690 children in need in 2011 to 1960 in 2016. The rate of children in need per 10,000 has also increased from 335 in 2011 to 395 in 2016 which is not consistent with the trend across Wales which has seen a small reduction in the overall rate of children in need per 10,000 population. 'Abuse and neglect' is consistently the most common category of need followed by 'child's illness or disability' and 'family in acute stress'. Parental mental ill health is the most common parental factor of children in need. 60% of admissions of children becoming looked after related to a case that had been open less than 6 months (2015/16 and 2016/17, figures reflect the number of babies coming into care).

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<sup>2</sup> SACC is detailed guidance and clear processes have been introduced with the principle aim being that no child will be accommodated by RCT unless all potential sources of care and support from family and friends have been considered.

Table 3: Child in Need population



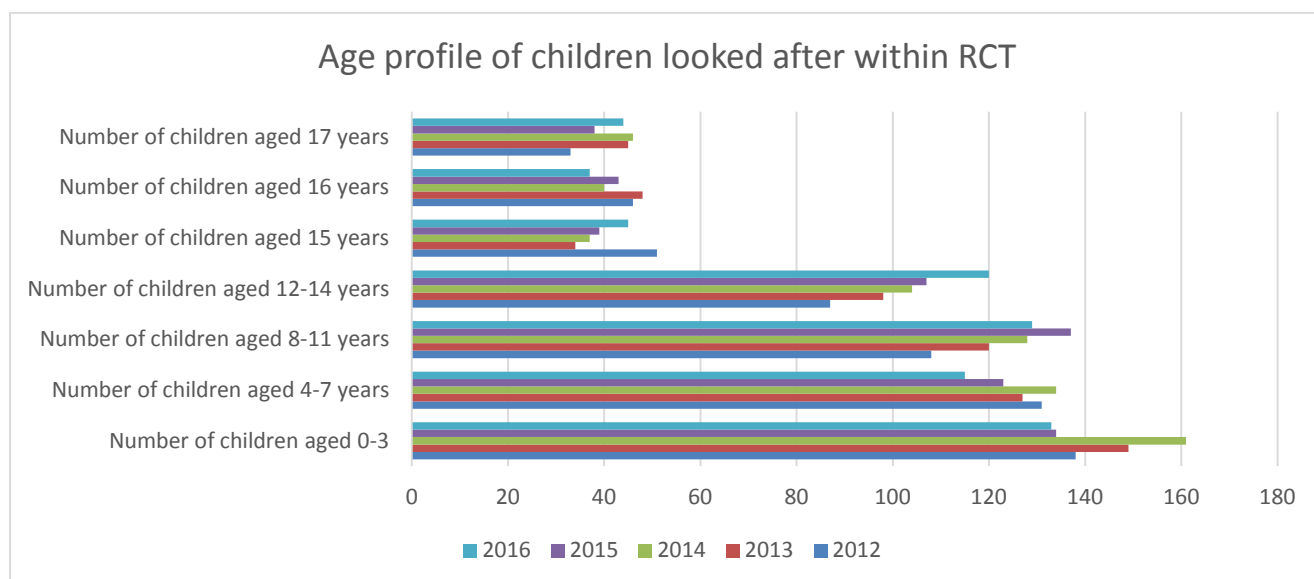
3.3 The number of children on the child protection register increased in RCT from 420 in 2011-12 to 460 in 2015-16 (joint highest rate in Wales at 92 per 10,000 population under 18 in 2015-16). These rates have remained above the Wales average for the last 5 years. There has also been an increase in the number of children on the child protection register at the point of admission into care from 56.6% in 2015/16 to 64% in 2016/17.<sup>3</sup>

### Children Looked After and Care Leaver Profile

- 3.4 The children looked after population within RCT has increased over the past five years from 550 in 2011 to 623 in 2016, an increase of 73 children. However, there have been fluctuations over the past two years. Males represent the highest proportion of children looked after.
- 3.5 The age profile of the children looked after population has fluctuated over the past five years. The age group 0-3 years made up the highest percentage of the looked after population between 2012 and 2016. Children aged 16 and 17 years make up the smallest percentage of the looked after children population.

<sup>3</sup> 140 out of 247 admissions in 2015/16 and 189 out of 295 admissions in 2016/17

Table 4: Age profile of children looked after (RCT)



3.6 The profile of admissions into care has noticeably changed in the last two years alone (2015/16 to 2016/17)<sup>4</sup> as is illustrated below:

- the number of admissions has increased from 247 in 2015-16 to 295 in 2016/17 (an increase of 48 children)
- the highest rate of admissions has been in the 'under 1 year' age group from 69 children to 86 children
  - the length of time between birth and the admission into care (for those children under 1 at the point of admission) is up to 1 week in the majority of cases which correlates with the percentage of children at this stage on the child protection register at the point of admission (85% on average across 2015/16 and 2016/17) , followed by 3 months+
- the rate of admissions for the 'under 4 years' group has increased from 125 children to 163 children
- admissions increased slightly for children aged 8 to 10 years from 26 to 33
- the lowest number of admissions in 2015/16 was in the 'children aged 11 years' group (3 children) and 'children aged 12 years' in 2016/17 (3 children)
- admissions reduced slightly for the 'children aged 14-17' group from 51 to 43.
- a total of 15 admissions into care were made into the Disabled Children's Services Team between 2015/16 and 2016/17
- in 2015/16 38% (76/123) of admissions into care ceased to be looked after during the same period and this figure reduced to 29.7% (79/266) in 2016/17<sup>5</sup>

3.7 In considering the reasons for children becoming looked in RCT the most common identified need for care has been 'abuse and neglect' followed by 'family in acute stress'. This is consistent with the most common categories of need for children in need.

<sup>4</sup> Data provided by RCT (SACC and CLA QAP reports)

<sup>5</sup> Data for 2015/16 is for the period 1.5.17 to 31.3.17

3.8 The average number of days children are looked after has increased over the past five years from 1,332 days (3.65 years) in 2012 to 1,436 days (3.93 years) in 2016.

#### **Implications for commissioning and service delivery**

- The increasing number of children in need and children on the child protection register has contributed to an increase in the number of children becoming looked after and greater demand for placements.
- The changing age profile of the children looked after population presents challenges in forecasting future demand and identifying placement requirements. For example, with young children making up the highest proportion of the children looked after population the priority for placement provision should be focused on family type placements (kinship care, adoption, alternative orders such as SGO's). If the reducing rates of admissions for children aged 11 years and above continues the demand for residential provision should start to reduce.
- The new processes for reducing admissions into the looked after system has the potential to lead to a decrease in the numbers of children looked after.

## **4. Residential Care Profile**

### **Demand and Capacity**

4.1 The placement profile in RCT has changed in the past five years (2012-2016) and this needs to be taken into account when considering future demand for residential placements. The key points to note are:

- Foster care represents the highest proportion of all placements with the following patterns in the placement profile over the past five to six years:
  - a reduction in the number of children being placed in independent foster care between 2012 and 2016, however the mid year data for 2017 indicates an increase in the use of such placements
  - an increase in the number of children placed in in-house mainstream foster care, with mid year data for 2017 indicating that this continues to increase
  - a large increase in the number of children placed in kinship placements
- Residential care as a proportion of all placements is noticeably low at 6% (of all placements) for independent residential care (2012 to 2016) and less than 2% for in-house placements (A fluctuation in the number of children being placed for adoption)
- The numbers being placed with parents fluctuated between 2012 and 2016 with an overall reduction, however mid year data for 2017 indicates an increase in the use of such placements
- Increasing numbers being placed within the RCT area.

4.2 There is no single dataset within RCT that captures placement occupancy rates, vacancy rates and waiting lists. However, it has been possible (using the various datasets provided) to identify a total of 382 in-house placements (not including Nantgwyn places due to the specialist short break service it provides to disabled children) as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- Mainstream foster carers – 214 placements (133 households)
- Kinship foster carers – 133 placements (94 households)
- Support foster carers – 4 placements (2 households)

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<sup>6</sup> Data correct as at 21 February 2017

- Family link carers – 21 placements (9 households)
- Beddau residential home – 5 placements
- Bryndar residential home – 5 placements

Taking into account the placement availability at the time (21<sup>st</sup> February 2017) and the number of children looked after at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 RCT were in a position to provide an in house placement to 61% of their children (382/623)<sup>7</sup>.

4.3 It would be very challenging, therefore for the in-house provision alone to provide sufficient choice to match properly the needs of individual children (particularly those with challenging/ complex needs) so there is always likely to be a need to purchase placements from the independent sector.

4.4 RCT currently has three in-house residential children’s homes:

- Bryndar – accommodates five children aged between 12 and 16 years of age
- Beddau – accommodates five children aged between 12 and 16 years of age and who have a school or education placement
- Treherbert – can accommodate four children (although the provision is currently not in use)

4.5 Taking data available for the period January 2015 to February 2017 from different sources provided by RCT, it has been possible to identify the following activity relating to current (and potential) demand for residential provision.

	Number of 8-11 year olds admitted into care	Number of 12-16 year olds admitted into care	Total number of children admitted into residential care <sup>8</sup>		Total number of children in residential care <sup>9</sup>	
			In-house (RCT)	Independent	In-house (RCT)	Independent
2015/16	28	57	2	8	9	36
2016/17	42	46	3	8	9	30

4.6 A number of stakeholders during the review have specified the need for more provision within RCT with particular reference made to the need for placements for the following groups of children and young people young people with learning difficulties (as currently limited in matching due to their vulnerabilities);

- short breaks for children who do not have disabilities;
- young people (18 and over) who are not ready to move into any form of independence (due to the level and complexity of their needs)

However, it has not been possible to establish demand for such provision, apart from anecdotal information. There were numerous observations made by stakeholders about the way in which

<sup>8</sup> Data for 2015-16 covers the period January 2015 to March 2016 and data for 2016-17 covers the period April 2016 to march 2017)

<sup>9</sup> Data for 2016 taken as at 24.6.16 and data for 2017 taken as at 17.3.17

residential care is perceived and the need to both raise the profile of the quality of the provision and ensure that residential care is considered as an appropriate placement option at an earlier stage. As illustrated within this report the overall use of residential care is low in comparison to the use of foster care and the use of in-house residential care is low in comparison to the use of independent sector residential care.

- 4.7 The quality of the in-house residential homes was considered during the review<sup>10</sup>. Two, Bryndar and Beddau were identified as being of very good quality with regards to the quality of the environment, outcomes achieved for children and young people, quality of service delivery, the skills, knowledge and experience of the workforce.

As Treherbert was not in operation at the time of this review it has not been possible to review in detail the capacity and quality of the provision. However, the CSSIW inspection in 2016 expressed a number of concerns about aspects of delivery including: placements being inconsistent with the statement of purpose; review of quality of care not being completed; children not benefitting from placements as intended; high admission rates many of which on an unplanned basis. RCT took the decision to cease operation at Treherbert in light of the number of incidents involving residents that occurred and the expected Non Compliance Notice issued by CSSIW after their Inspection in July 2016.

## Budget

- 4.8 The current budget commitment within RCT for services to children looked after and care leavers totals £28.338M:
- In-house residential placement budget allocation is £1.715M for 14 places (Including Treherbert Community Home) which represents 6.1% of the budget for children looked after and care leaver services.
  - Independent residential placement budget allocation is £5,742.070 for 37 places which represents 20.3% of the budget for children looked after and care leaver services
- 4.9 The budget commitment for each residential home for 2017-18 differs. A breakdown of budgeted costs for each home is shown below.

*Table 5: RCT budget commitments for residential care provision (2017-18)*

	<b>Bryndar</b>	<b>Beddau</b>	<b>Treherbert</b>
<b>Employees</b>	£522,790	£467,190	£511,460
<b>Premises</b>	£22,670	£17,540	£21,640
<b>Transport</b>	£5,640	£5,970	£3,900
<b>Supplies and Services</b>	£21,990	£19,500	£33,290
<b>Total</b>	<b>£573,090</b>	<b>£510,200</b>	<b>£570,290</b>

- 4.10 The weekly unit cost for each in-house standard residential care home varies depending upon the number of bed's available and occupancy levels at any one time. The weekly unit cost per standard placement per in-house residential care home at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 ranged from £2,156 per week

<sup>10</sup> Feedback from stakeholders, CSSIW (Care Standards Inspectorate Wales) inspection reports (2016), Regulation 32 visits and reports

(Beddau) to £3,760 per week (Treherbert). The average weekly cost per placement during this period was £2,932<sup>11</sup>.

A summary of the actual weekly unit cost per week for each in-house residential home is shown below.

Table 6: RCT actual weekly cost per in-house residential care placements (31<sup>st</sup> March 2016)

	Bryndar	Beddau	Treherbert
<b>Budgeted unit cost per week per placement (based on 95% occupancy)</b>	£2,457	£2,175	£2,479
<b>Actual unit cost per week per placement</b>	<b>£2,882</b>	<b>£2,156</b>	<b>£3,760</b>
<b>No. of bed's available</b>	5	5	4
<b>Actual occupancy</b>	78%	91%	61%

In order to measure the cost effectiveness of the in-house residential care service a comparison can be made with the weekly cost of an externally commissioned 'standard' placement. The average weekly cost of a standard external placement at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 was £2,821<sup>12</sup>.

4.11 When considering the unit cost for standard in-house residential placements it is helpful to compare these with the unit costs of alternative provision

	Number of weeks	Cost per week	Total (per child/ intervention)
In-house standard residential care weekly cost	205 <sup>13</sup>	£2,932 <sup>14</sup>	£601,060
External standard residential care weekly cost	205 <sup>15</sup>	£2,821 <sup>16</sup>	£578,305
External fostering placement	205 <sup>17</sup>	£707 <sup>18</sup>	£144,935

<sup>11</sup> Average actual weekly cost RCT in-house residential care (March 2016)

<sup>12</sup> 4c's Commissioning unit (CCSR baseline data March 2016)

<sup>13</sup> Average length of time children spend in care in RCT

<sup>14</sup> Average actual weekly cost RCT in-house residential care (March 2016)

<sup>15</sup> Average length of time children spend in care in RCT

<sup>16</sup> 4c's Commissioning unit (CCSR baseline data March 2016)

<sup>17</sup> Average length of time children spend in care in RCT

<sup>18</sup> 4c's Commissioning unit (CCSR baseline data March 2016)



In-house fostering (RCT)	205 <sup>19</sup>	£422 <sup>20</sup>	£86,510
Kinship fostering (RCT)	205 <sup>21</sup>	£197 <sup>22</sup>	£40,385

### Implications for commissioning and service delivery

- In-house residential placements represent a small proportion of the total number of placements within RCT (less than 2% of all placements).
- The admission rates for in-house residential care remain low with only 2 placements made during 2015/16 and 3 placements made during 2016/17. Admissions into independent residential care remained static at 8 placements in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 but the overall number of children using in independent residential placements is reducing.
- Whilst the number of children who fall into the age category (12 to 16) that could be matched to the current residential children's homes is reducing, the number of 8 to 11 year olds has increased slightly. With the average length of time being spent in care now at 3.93 years there could be the potential demand for residential placements in the future. However, it has to be noted that the strategic drivers and operational developments within RCT (along with notable improvements in placement stability) also need to be considered as these have the potential to reduce the number of children becoming or remaining looked after.
- The average cost per week of in-house residential places is comparable with those commissioned independently.
- The cost of residential care provision is higher than the cost of in-house foster care, external fostering and kinship placements.

## 5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Given the challenges to all providers in providing good quality residential care to the relatively small number of children for whom it best meets their needs, RCT needs to continue to focus its residential provision in a reduced number of high quality units. On the basis that the demand for residential care is reducing and has the potential to reduce further in the future no further in-house residential provision is required (in addition to what is currently available in Bryndar and Beddau). ) Whilst the changing age profile of children looked after may require ongoing review of the focus of provision in these two homes there is no evidence to suggest that Treherbert Home should be re-opened.
- 5.2 The quality and profile of the in-house residential children's homes that are currently in operation (Bryndar, Beddau) should be further promoted across the service.
- Processes that have been introduced/ that are being developed to support children to remain in a family environment (outside of the looked after system) are embedded and their impact monitored and evaluated

<sup>19</sup> Average length of time children spend in care in RCT

<sup>20</sup> Source: National Fostering Framework pilot data (RCT)

<sup>21</sup> Average length of time children spend in care in RCT

<sup>22</sup> Source: National Fostering Framework pilot data (RCT)

- 5.3 The local authority should continue to review the profile of children, particularly those with complex and challenging needs who are at a higher risk of instability, and potential entry into care. This should be used to understand their needs and explore different models of support that would enable them to remain with their families
- 5.4 Investment should continue to be made in intensive wraparound and dedicated support to children and families and carers that ensures there are dedicated resources to focus on:
- preventing children entering the care system;
  - supporting the return home of those children who do enter the care system;
  - promoting placement stability for those children and young people who do need to remain in care
- 5.5 Undertake a review of the When I'm Ready scheme to ensure that it continues to develop and offer a supportive and transitional step up to independence. This should include a training and support programme for When I'm Ready carers to enable them to support young people with complex needs who will take longer to develop their independence skills. This is particularly pertinent given that the numbers of children being admitted into care at the ages of 14-17 are still at a level that requires an appropriate and timely response and the profile of young people whose complex needs require additional support to enable them to transition into independence quickly.
- 5.6 Further develop its accommodation strategy for care leavers to ensure there is a sufficient range of placements to support a managed transition into independence and adulthood
- 5.7 Work with the regional Commissioning Resource (4c'S ) to develop an intelligence framework that brings together the following information in order to inform future commissioning priorities:
- an understanding of the needs of children in need and children on the child protection register to help manage new admissions and inform projections for the future CLA population (numbers, ages, needs)
  - detailed analysis of the individual needs of CLA in order to inform the development of wrap around support for children in placements
  - activity relating to admissions into care based on type of placement taking into account: age profile, identified needs, length of time in placement,
  - activity relating to occupancy, vacancies, turnover and waiting lists for the different placement types to help identify pressures in demand and gaps in provision
  - information relating to the quality, impact and effectiveness of placements in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people