RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-2016

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 6
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	**REPORTS OF THE TWO SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS IN RELATION TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (Educational Attainment and Placement Costs)**

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1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make Members aware of the findings and recommendations of the two Scrutiny Working Groups, who conducted scrutiny reviews in relation to Looked After Children during 2014/15

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 Members are asked to endorse the findings and recommendations of the two working groups and agree that the reports be passed to the Executive with the request that they act upon the recommendations.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 During 2014, the former Community and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee and the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee each agreed to form a working group. The Community and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee was concerned at the rising numbers and costs of Looked After Children placements whilst the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee was anxious to improve the educational attainment of those children 'looked after'.

3.2 Due to the change in the Council's scrutiny framework, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is now asked to consider both working group reports which are attached as Appendix A and Appendix B and subject to agreement, these reports will be passed to the Executive for consideration.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

21ST SEPTMEBER 2015.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Item: Reports of the Scrutiny Working Groups in relation to Looked After Children– 'Educational Attainment' and ' Placement Costs'

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Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

Working group into the educational outcomes of children and young people who are looked after

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FOREWORD

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we have seen a significant rise in the number of children and young people who are looked after children in its care, a picture that is similar across Wales. On the 31st March 2014 there were 650 children in the care of this Local Authority. It has been well documented that looked after children are less likely to achieve the educational outcomes we, as the Corporate Parent, would want for them and less likely to gain access to the wide range of benefits and opportunities which are available. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we want our most vulnerable children and young people to realise their full potential and achieve their goals by becoming more successful learners and confident individuals and we want to close the gap between the educational outcomes of children and young people who are looked after and those who are not.

As a working group we were always conscious of the issues and challenges that children and young people who are looked after face and the severe trauma and disadvantages they have experienced in the lead up to becoming looked after by the local authority as well as the effect this has on their educational outcomes. However, outside influences such as multiple educational and care placements can also impact upon educational achievements falling below that of their peers.

Throughout this review the working group examined the services and support that is currently available for children and young people who are looked after and considered how the hard work and commitment which is already in place can be improved.

The working group had the opportunity to work closely with numerous officers within the Council including those in the Ymbarel team that brings together health and education services for the looked after children population as well as Head Teachers and their staff who opened their doors to us and welcomed our visits to their schools in order that we conducted our research in a thorough and effective manner. The working group held 6 meetings over a period of 7 months hearing key evidence from expert witnesses and on behalf of the working group I would like to thank each and every one of them for their time and valuable contributions to this review.

Finally, I hope that the working group's report and subsequent recommendations will assist Cabinet improve services for children and young people who are looked after to ensure they succeed academically to the best of their ability which will equip them with the best possible life chances.

Councillor C. Leyshon
Chair of the former Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

SECTION 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE & METHODOLOGY

Background

The Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee had regularly expressed concern about the poor educational outcomes of children and young people who are looked after and highlighted the need to ensure that outcomes are improved for this vulnerable group of learners. On the 9th of July 2014, Members were provided with an update on the educational outcomes achieved by children and young people that were looked after during 2012/13 in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). An overview was also provided on the role of the Ymbarel team who support schools to overcome the many barriers to learning faced by children and young people who are looked after and assist in enhancing the capacity of pre-school and school settings to meet their needs.

Following the presentation, Members of the Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Corporate Parenting Board resolved to set up a working group to further explore the educational outcomes of children and young people who are looked after. The focus of the work would be to not only recognise the good work currently undertaken by the Council's Education & Lifelong Learning and Children's Services in relation to children and young people who are looked after but also to identify possible areas for further development. The areas Members wished to explore in greater detail included: the grants available to improve educational outcomes; good practice, support and training available; achievements of children and young people who are looked after in RCT relative to other local authorities (LAs); barriers to learning experienced; and out of county placements. It was hoped that this investigation would help inform Cabinet on future policy matters arising from this work.

Although the investigation was intended to focus on educational outcomes, the working group was very aware that educational attainment could not be viewed in isolation. The group was mindful that many contextual factors can significantly hamper the progress of children and young people who are looked after including their mental health and wellbeing. It was also recognised that the collation of meaningful data which captured the life experiences of children and young people who are looked after was not without its challenges but it was nevertheless considered that this was necessary in order to provide some insight into the barriers faced by this cohort of learners.

The primary focus of the working group was on children and young people that were looked after and of school age, specifically those attending secondary school/specialist settings, so that this would provide us with some insight into best practice in the field. However, the importance of early intervention and preventative approaches during primary education was recognised as being crucial to minimising the risk of longer term difficulties. The report relates to all children and young people who are looked after and many of the recommendations are relevant to them all.

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At its inaugural meeting on the 3rd November 2014 the working group agreed the following Terms of Reference and scope of the review:

Terms of Reference
The main focus of the review is as follows:

'To review the effectiveness of the services in place to improve the educational outcomes for Looked after Children within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council'

The scope of the review focused on:

- gaining an understanding of the service provision available for children and young people who are looked after within the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate (e.g. the Access & Inclusion Service and Schools), Children's Services and their partnership organisations;
- improving understanding of the funding arrangements relating to children and young people who are looked after including the effective use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant;
- gaining an understanding of the demands placed on the service;
- securing an understanding of the educational achievements of children and young people who are looked after in RCT and how the local position compares to the regional and national picture. Baseline statistical and comparative data would be explored where available including Child in Need census data;
- gaining an understanding of the barriers to learning for children and young people who are looked after; including out of county placements;
- exploring a range of case studies to help illustrate the challenges faced by children and young people that after looked after and the support provided;
- undertaking a range of visits to schools to explore and observe practice in place for children and young people who are looked after; and
- gaining an understanding of best practice evident within RCT schools.

Stakeholders
Director, Education & Lifelong Learning
Acting Service Director for Access, Engagement & Inclusion
Access and Inclusion Service staff including the Ymbarel Team (LAC Education Co-ordinator; LAC Educational Psychologists)
School based staff (Head Teachers, Teachers, Learning Support Assistants, and Governors)
Children's Services Officers
Foster Carers
Children and young people who are looked after.

Visits
Members undertook a range of visits to schools across the County Borough in order to understand the barriers to looked after children and young people achieving positive educational outcomes and to see first-hand how RCT attempts to address and overcome these. Visits included the following: Tonyrefail School (22nd January 2015) and the Tai Education Centre (13th March 2015).

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Membership of the working group

The working group consisted of the following Members from the former Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:

County Borough Councillors:

(Mrs) Anita Calvert
(Mrs) Margaret Griffiths
(Mrs) Sylvia Jones
(Mrs) Christina Leyshon
Mr Barry Stephens
Mr Jeff Fish – Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr Mark Cleverley – Representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel

The working group's thanks are conveyed to representatives from Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and partner organisations for their valuable time in providing information and guidance whilst exploring the educational achievement of children and young people who are looked after.

Methodology

In undertaking its work the working group considered a range of evidence which included:

- An analysis of Council held data
- Wales Children in Need Census Statistical Release for 2014 published Feb 2015 (LAC for three months at 31st March 2014), Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for children and young people looked after by local authorities 2013 and 2014 & Looked after Children Statistical Release for 2014 published September 2014 (LAC March 2014 to April 2015)
- A range of case studies of children and young people who are looked after
- Funding arrangements
- Partnership working
- Duties and Responsibilities of RCT
- Delivery of services
- The Welsh Government Consultation Document – 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales'

SECTION 2: NATIONAL CONTEXT

The term 'Looked After' was introduced by the Children's Act 1989 and refers to children and young people:

- who are under 18 years old;
- who live away from their parents or family; and
- who are supervised by a social worker from the local authority's Children's Services department.

A child or young person can become looked after for many reasons, including family breakdown, abuse, trauma, family illness or the death of a parent. Many children and young people who are looked after experience emotional trauma which can negatively impact on their ability to learn effectively, and to develop appropriate social, emotional and behavioural skills. The severe attachment difficulties often experienced by children and young people who are looked after can be a considerable barrier to learning and engagement. These issues can be further exacerbated by:

- multiple placement breakdowns and instability in care arrangements;
- changes in household composition with children and young people frequently moving into/out of placements;
- unmet emotional, mental and physical needs;
- missed schooling and social opportunities;
- a lack of information sharing by professionals at crucial times;
- difficulties in coping with changes in school and in teaching staff, including adapting to supply staff; and
- support issues for children and young people who are looked after and placed out of county.

During the study it became increasingly evident to the working group that education can be a very low priority for some of these children and young people as they are often dealing with complex emotional and psychological issues. The trauma of dealing with abuse and being separated from family members can be exceptionally difficult to deal with and to overcome.

A power point presentation delivered by the Educational Psychologist for the local authority highlighted this issue very clearly. It was emphasised that a child's primary attachment to caregivers provides the foundations for socio-emotional well-being and children's capacity to learn. The effects of insecure attachment can include poor sense of self, lack of self-awareness and an over reactive response to difficulties. Secure attachment relationships on the other hand correlates strongly with higher academic attainment.

Welsh Government

Whilst local authorities have the responsibility to act as a Corporate Parent for children and young people who are looked after, the Welsh Government holds overall responsibility for the improvements in the educational outcomes for all looked after

children and young people in Wales. To facilitate improvement there is a variety of legislation, regulations, guidance and financial support.

The Children Act 2004 strengthened the role of the local authority as Corporate Parent with a particular duty to promote the educational achievement of children and young people who are looked after.
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The Welsh Government is committed to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for its dealings with children and young people and has adopted **Seven Core Aims** that ensures that every child and young person:

- has a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development
- has access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities; including the acquisition of essential personal and social skills
- enjoys the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- has access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- is listened to, treated with respect, and is able to have their race and cultural identity respected;
- has a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and
- is not disadvantaged by child poverty.

Towards A Stable Life and a Brighter Future 2007 sets out the arrangements and functions that statutory partners must undertake in discharging their duties of co-operation with other statutory partners in respect of arrangements for the placement, health and education of children and young people who are looked after. It set out new legal requirements on local authorities to ensure educational provision for children and young people who are looked after and to designate a specialist practitioner to co-ordinate the child's education plan and address the educational needs of children and young people who are looked after and care leavers. It also highlighted that local authorities needed to ensure that every child and young person looked after by a local authority has an effective and high quality Personal Education Plan.

Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires the governing body of a maintained school in Wales to designate a member of staff as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children and young people who are looked after in the school.

The Education (Admission of Looked after Children) (Wales) Regulations 2009 requires that a looked after child's admission into a school is prioritised. Any education elements of a looked after child's plan such as transport to school, must be implemented quickly.

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Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG)

The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) provides additional funding for schools, the aim of which is to improve outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and children and young people who are looked after. It is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential. In 2013, Welsh Government introduced a specifically dedicated element of the PDG for children and young people who are looked after which is referred to as PDG LAC. To date this has provided targeted support and/or resources to every child and young person that is looked after. Welsh Government has recently issued guidance on the grant in advance of the 2015-16 financial year to advise schools on how to best spend their PDG. Locally, the PDG LAC has been allocated via the Central South Consortium (CSC). A notional amount will be retained in the consortium to address some regional priorities for children and young people who are looked after but it has recently been agreed that a significant proportion of this budget will be re-allocated to RCT. A detailed plan has been submitted to the CSC outlining priorities for development within RCT and processes for awarding this grant to schools. Ultimately schools will remain accountable for addressing the needs of children and young people who are looked after within individual schools but the allocation of the grant will further ensure that a range of additional strategies and interventions can be put in place and additional needs are addressed effectively and outcomes improved.

In CSC, focus has been placed on working with the five local authority LAC Co-ordinators in a commitment to raise the achievement of all children and young people who are looked after and to develop sustainable capacity within the system. The CSC strategy is based on the following principles:

- Every looked after child has a clear and measurable education plan agreed, monitored and provided for by the school;
- The right provision is in the right place to support educational progress; Efficiency in commissioning of specialist support for children and young people where a number of children are placed in the same school or area; effective training and development for staff working with children and young people looked after by local authorities as well as social care staff supporting educational outcomes;
- Learner Voice informing provision and quality of support for the education of looked after children in each authority; and
- System wide drive to focus on the performance of looked after children, evaluate what is working and learn from it to build sustainable impact across the region.

RCT has submitted a costed plan in relation to these priorities and it is hoped that £428K will be awarded to the local authority in due course. The local authority is currently awaiting approval that the plans have been accepted. RCT's priorities include a focus on:

- interventions aimed at reducing the gap between the attainments of children who are looked after and all children in RCT through targeted interventions. This to be achieved by establishing a muti-agency panel to consider support requests from schools; providing specialist tuition for key stage 4 learners in preparation for

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GCSEs; and the provision of literacy and numeracy support for learners in year 5/6 prior to key stage 3 transition ;

- closing the gap between the attainments of children and young people who are looked after in relation to that of all children in RCT by ensuring that the right provision is in place at the right time and is utilised in the most efficient and effective way. This will include providing additional support for learners who are unable to access education due to their care circumstances and the provision of additional support to meet their needs, including their therapeutic needs ;

- providing intensive training and support for social workers and foster carers in relation to what works in improving educational outcomes ;

- support and training for Designated Teachers through cluster based training initiatives. Focus to be placed on improving the quality and timeliness of Personal Education Plans ;

- support for Designated Teachers so that they have greater clarity about their roles and responsibilities and that of schools. This to include the development of a LAC Friendly School resource file; and

- LAC Co-ordinators developing innovative approaches and interventions by ensuring that the voice of children and young people in care are captured through participation and consultation groups, and appropriate inteventions put in place to address these.

It is hoped through the effective implementation of the costed plan improved outcomes for children and young people who are looked after will be achieved

Next Steps

Evidently there are a number of national programmes and policies in place to intervene early and improve the outcomes of vulnerable learners, including children and young people who are looked after. However, it is recognised that the educational attainment of looked after children and young people in Wales are consistently poor with little progress year on year. Recently the Welsh Government's Department for Education & Skills produced a joint draft strategy with the Department for Health & Social Services entitled 'Raising the Ambitions and Educational Attainment of Children who are Looked After in Wales'. This has been the focus of a recent consultation and final strategy will be produced in future to provide a framework for future action in relation to policy development. This strategy document was given due consideration when drafting this report.

SECTION 3: NATIONAL AND LOCAL INDICATORS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER

National Indicators

This section provides an overview of the national data available for children and young people who are looked after by local authorities. This data has been sourced from Welsh Government statistical releases . **It should however been noted that the definition of children and young people who are looked after does vary from one statistical release to another and this creates difficulties in making meaningful comparisons across different data sets.**

1. Numbers of Children and Young people who are looked after Children (Source: Children in Need Census 2014)

There were 5,755 children looked after by local authorities in Wales on the 31st March 2014. Data is summarised in Appendix 1 Table 1. The rate of children and young people who are looked after per 10,000 of the population locally at this time for young people under the age of 18 was 130. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of children and young people who are looked after over the past decade with a 37% increase in the last 5 years alone. Based on this data, RCT ranks 18th out of the 22 local authorities for the numbers of children and young people who are looked after.

2. Educational Outcomes for Children and Young people who are looked after (Source: Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children who are looked after 2013-14)

Data relating to educational outcomes at the end of the Key Stages 2, 3 and GCSE's are summarised in Appendix 1 Table 2. Data suggests that the numbers of children achieving average level outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 3 (KS3) show some concerning trends. Data for children and young people who are looked after by RCT shows a level of fluctuation for KS2 and KS3 but overall it is clear that they are below the Welsh average. Level 1 outcomes at GCSE currently lie below the Welsh average.

Very few children and young people who are looked after achieve the Level 2 threshold indicator (i.e. at least 5 A* - C grades at GCSEs) with only 6 local authorities out of 22 achieving the target This clearly suggests that there is a need for RCT and indeed many other local authorities to continue to focus on closing the gap in the educational attainment of children and young people who are looked after.

Poor educational attainment can lead to children leaving compulsory education without any qualifications and unable to find employment. Such pupils are classified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Across Wales the improvement of children and young peoples' chances of success through education remains a priority. However, in RCT there has been significant engagement of children and young people who are looked after in education, training or employment following their 19th birthday. The First Release statistical release (Adoptions,

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outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales 2013-14) highlights that the average number of care leavers on their 19th birthday during the year ending 31 March 2014 was 45.4% for Wales and 28.6% for RCT.

Whilst there is still room for improvement this is significantly better than the Welsh average of 45%. Please see (Appendix 1, Table 4) for further information.

RCT has enhanced its targeted provision for reducing numbers of young people who are NEET due to increased promotion of access to further education/training opportunities and the redesign of the Youth Service (to form the Youth Engagement and Participation Service).

3. Level of Special Educational Needs (SEN) of Children and Young people who are looked after (Source: Children in Need Census Data 2014)

A high level of Special Educational Needs (SEN) can significantly impact upon children and young people achieving expected learning outcomes. In order to assist children who have SEN, the SEN Code of Practice for Wales recommends that schools adopt a graduated response that encompasses an array of strategies (school action), which is further supplemented by specialist advice/support from the local authority and provision that is additional to and/or different to the majority of peers (school action plus).

Data sourced from the Children in Need Census Data 2014 illustrates the high numbers of children and young people who are looked after in Wales (see Appendix 1 Table 5) who require extra support for learning difficulties. The average proportion of children and young people who are looked after in Wales with a Statement of SEN is 19%. In RCT, this is also 19%. A further 48% of children and young people who are looked after in RCT are at school action/school action plus of the SEN Code of Practice for Wales. This data illustrates the high level of need our pupils encounter and the challenge that schools and central services experience in meeting these needs.

4. School Placements

In October 2014, there was a total of 391 statutory school age children in RCT. 70% of Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people who were looked after attended schools in county and 30% attended education provision out of county. Of the 70% of children and young people looked after and educated within Rhondda Cynon Taf only 87% attend mainstream schools in comparison to 97.6% of the wider RCT population of statutory school aged children. This clearly highlights the disproportionately higher number of children and young people who are looked after that require specialist education and provision to meet their needs. Further detail relating to statutory school aged learners is provided in Table 6.

When children and young people who are looked after are placed out of county, the host local authority is responsible for meeting their educational needs and making educational provision. RCT will liaise with other local authorities to ensure that

appropriate arrangements are in place. As a large Council RCT has an extensive range of specialist provisions available for learners and members of the working group were advised that smaller local authorities often have less specialist provision available and this can result in delays in accessing appropriate specialist placements.

It was brought to the attention of the working group that all relevant information about the children or young people placed in County is not always made available prior to placement which can impact negatively on provision planning and the prompt completion of Personal Education Plans.

5. Care Placements

The impact of multiple care placements can have a detrimental impact on children and young people who are looked after in terms of their educational achievements, Wellbeing and chances of employment. In contrast, young people who experience good quality and stable placements are more likely to succeed educationally and be employed. With multiple placements comes the possibility of numerous school moves which can mean repeated fresh starts and the many challenges that this can present. This can particularly affect young children who may lose contact with siblings. Frequent changes and instability in care arrangements can result in children and young people who are looked after experiencing complex psychological difficulties due to unmet emotional needs. Furthermore, research suggests that the frequency and timing of placements and school moves can also play a crucial part in preventing children in care from achieving the levels predicted from earlier key stage outcomes.

Data collated on the 31st of March 2014 is provided in Appendix 1 Table 7. This clearly illustrates that a significant number of children and young people had 3 changes in their care placement during 2013/14. 7% of children and young people who were looked after by RCT at this time experienced at least 3 or more care placements. Whilst this equates to a significant number of 45 children and young people, this is below the Welsh average of 8%.

6. Personal Education Plans

The timely compilation and completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are subject to a performance indicator which is monitored and reported by Children's Services. The data in Appendix 1 Table 8 demonstrates that within RCT some further progress needs to be made in respect of the timely completion of the PEP within 20 school days. The working group felt that better tracking of children and young people who are looked after from one placement to another could help identify where there are gaps. It was evident that this is not just an RCT issue and it was recognised that information can be slow in being exchanged from local authority to local authority when a child or young person transfers to a new County for social care reasons. When data comparisons are made with other LAs in relation to completing PEPs within 20 working days (Appendix 1, Table 9) RCT is evidently

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below the national average of 64.92% at 62.34%. This is an area that requires further improvement.

7. School Attendance

The internal attendance data for 2013/14 (academic year) detailed within Tables 10 and 11 shows that the attendance of pupils at both primary and secondary level remains higher for children in local authority care than for those learners who are not. Attendance for those children and young people who are looked after in primary schools in 2014 stands at 95.9% which is 1.4% higher than those pupils not looked after. Attendance for those children looked after in secondary schools in 2014 was 94.4% which was 1.2% higher than non-looked after pupils. Although the attendance of children and young people who are looked after in RCT is consistently high and better than that of children who are not looked after it is important to recognise the well documented positive correlation between attendance and attainment is not evident in the case of children and young people who are looked after. This is because there are numerous and diverse reasons for poor outcomes. Many of the contributing factors referred to previously in the report need to be considered when looking at the barriers to children and young people who are looked after achieving positive outcomes.

The national attendance data published in Table 12 (please note that the reporting period for this national benchmarking data is financial and not academic year) suggests that looked after children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are performing above the Welsh average for primary and secondary attendance. This data places our primary attendance data for looked after children and young people as being joint 13th in Wales, and our secondary data at an impressive 4th place.

(It is important to note that the national benchmarking data of the attendance of pupils looked after pupils as set out in Table 12, only captures the sessions missed by pupils during the period in which they are children who are looked after. This differs to the national benchmarking data for attendance which is concerned with absence rates of all pupils).

8. Exclusions

Data relating to the fixed term exclusions of looked after children illustrates that exclusion rates within RCT are favourable. Please see Table 13 for further information. The national percentage of children and young people who were looked after and received a fixed period of exclusion during 2013/14 was 8.9%. In RCT this figure was 8.2% which is below the national percentage. The average length of exclusion was 2 days which is slightly above the 1.7 days national average.

SECTION 4: THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Emotional and Psychological Problems

Children and young people who are looked after are at greater risk of poorer educational outcomes if attachment disorders or psychological difficulties associated with trauma or abuse are evident. These difficulties can impact considerably on a child and young person's emotional wellbeing and behaviour. The working group received a presentation from the Educational Psychologist for children and young people who are looked after (Senior Practitioner) on the impact of poor attachment during the early years on a child or young person's development in subsequent years. It was apparent from the training that the life chances of children and young people in care can be adversely affected by attachment issues and can become compromised when compared to their peers. The working group considered that this research was instrumental in being able to fully understand the barriers to learning that children and young people who are looked after experience.

Attachment describes the bond that takes place between infants and care givers. Babies and children need to feel safe and secure in order to grow and develop the social and emotional skills and competencies necessary to form positive relationships with other people. Attachment difficulties can occur when the care provided is not good enough and the needs of the child are not being effectively met. With some children this can start soon after birth where a parent or care giver is unable to look after the child for periods of time. This can result in attachment issues which can have a profound and long lasting impact on a child or young person.

Secure attachment leads to resilience, independence, compliance, empathy, an ability to control and regulate emotions, social competence, improved self-esteem and positive feelings. In contrast, poor or insecure attachment can have a significant detrimental impact on a child and the effect on brain development has been likened to the experience of sustaining 'traumatic injuries'. This can leave children with lasting impairments to brain development and function and negative physiological, emotional and social issues can become prevalent. In a learning environment, children and young people with insecure attachments can experience organisational difficulties, poor concentration, speech and language delay, difficulties with cognitive development and an inability to cope with the unexpected.

These within-child factors can be further exacerbated by contextual factors which children and young people who are looked after have little control over. These can include multiple school moves, placement breakdowns and separation from family and siblings. Placement breakdowns can result in children and young people experiencing significant gaps in education due to unavoidable delays in securing new educational placements when new care arrangements are put in place. For children and young people placed out of county there may be delays in accessing both mainstream and specialist placements, and difficulties experienced in securing much needed help and support from external agencies and partners.

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The barriers facing children and young people who are looked after are complex, numerous and diverse and this can make it incredibly difficult for them to engage with the curriculum and the process of learning. When difficulties are experienced this can result in children and young people disengaging from learning which results in a further deterioration in their wellbeing and behaviour. This can lead to difficulties in coping and conforming with schools' expectations, which in turn can result in exclusions from school and a negative cycle and pattern of poor behaviour and interaction with others.

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SECTION 5: CASE STUDIES

Case Studies

The working group considered that the inclusion of case studies would help to capture some of the life experiences of children and young people in local authority care in a way that perhaps data in isolation is not able to reflect.

A total of four different case studies of year 11 young people are provided to give a flavour of the range of challenges faced by 4 young people in local authority care and the impact this has on their outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

Case Study A

Child A is a 16 year old LAC who became looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2008. Since this time, Child A has experienced:

- 2 episodes of being looked after (briefly in 2008; ongoing since 2009)
- 4 respite foster care homes
- 5 foster care placements
- 2 returns home to parent (since 2008)
- 2 placements in a residential home (1 in England)
- 3 educational placements (1 in England)
- Accommodation under section 20, section 38 and more latterly section 31.

Young person A experienced 6 placement breakdowns which necessitated a change in placement. There is limited information with regards to the educational outcomes for Child A due to poor levels of engagement and high numbers of placement moves.

Case Study B

Child B is 16 year old who initially became looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2013 following the death of the sole parent.

Since becoming looked after, young person B has experienced:
- An extended period of care (February 2013 –present)
- 3 respite foster care homes
- 5 foster care placements
- 2 educational placements
- Accommodation under section 20
- Young person B has experienced 6 placement breakdowns since 2013.

Despite the many challenges faced by young person B, there remains an expectation that GCSE qualifications will be achieved in English and Mathematics. One BTEC qualification will also hopefully be achieved. Child B has also completed Application of Number and Communication qualifications. Support has been provided for Child B from a range of professionals in Education and Children's Services. This has enabled young

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person B to access bespoke education packages and interventions which has allowed progress to be made despite the trauma that has been endured.

Case Study C

Child C is a 16 year old who initially became looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2009 when behaviour became unmanageable. Prior to becoming looked after, Child C was placed on the Child Protection (CP) register. At the time that Child C became looked after, a specialist provision was attended in RCT due to young person C's Special Educational Needs (SEN). Since becoming looked after Child C has experienced:

- 2 periods of being Looked After
- 6 foster care placements
- 1 failed and brief recent return home to parent 4 placements in a residential home (1 specialist placement in England; 2 in RCT and 1 in a nearby Local Authority)
- 6 educational placements (4 specialist placements in RCT; 1 in England and 1 in a nearby Local Authority)
- 3 placements with relatives
- Accommodation under section 20

Child C has experienced 7 placement breakdowns. Due to Child C's poor levels of engagement and high number of placement moves, the educational outcomes are limited. Child C has been able to obtain one Entry Level 3 qualification which in the light of the many barriers to learning experienced is a significant achievement.

Case Study D

Child D is a 16 year old who initially became looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf in March 2006 when both parents became deceased. Child D is a pupil with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Since becoming looked after, Child D has experienced:
- 1 episode of being looked after since first coming into care
- 7 foster care placements
- 4 respite placements
- 5 placements in a residential care home
- 11 educational placements
- Accommodation under section 20, section 38 and section 31

Young person D has experienced 11 placement breakdowns. Due to young person D's poor level of engagement and high number of placement moves, the outcomes are limited in terms of educational attainments. Unfortunately, Child D's care background has had a significant impact on daily functioning. More positively, Child D has been relatively engaged with education for this last academic year. Even though placed out of county in a local authority which was unable to meet young person D's complex educational, emotional, social and behavioural needs, young person D has continued to an educational placement. Young person D currently accesses a part time placement at a

vocational centre. Young person D has been more motivated in the current educational placement and will achieve the following a small number of level 1 awards and a health and safety qualification..

Case Study Analysis

The case studies serve to highlight the challenges that some of our children and young people who are looked after have faced in recent years. The difficulties of adapting to becoming looked after in the first instance are further exacerbated by multiple care placements – both in and out of county, and in many cases frequent and numerous breakdowns in care placements over sustained and prolonged periods. The case studies also illustrate the need for accessing specialist placements for some of the vulnerable young people and the provision of additional educational support from a range of partners for the majority. The barriers to learning for children and young people in care within the case studies include vulnerabilities associated with being looked after; the experience of abuse, trauma and loss; repeated foster care placement breakdowns; and a number of school placement moves. In these cases, multiple school placements often resulted in a disengagement from education. Placement breakdowns can often lead to significant gaps in education particularly when placed out of county where it can be difficult to obtain appropriate education provision. Improving placement stability continues to be a key priority for RCT contributing to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of the child.

The interventions put in place by the local authority demonstrate the intensity of the input and support that has been required in order to achieve the educational outcomes recorded within the case studies. The level of joint working and co-ordination of multiple partners is significant in order to secure specialist placements to address complex behaviour issues or to secure specialist education whilst placed out of county. Often the Education Psychology Service is called upon relating to concerns around emotional and/or behavioural development or poor literacy/numeracy development. Input from the Behaviour Support Service, Children's Services, Youth Offending Service and the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is also required. Frequently, there is a need to secure educational activities of a vocational nature for a child or applications made to the local authority's Education Other than at School (EOTAS) provision for ongoing support.

The working group noted the significant amount of support Child B had received from a number of professionals involved in education and care to enable the young person to access education.

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SECTION 6: PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER WITHIN RCT

Members of the working group visited a number of education providers within the County Borough to gain a first-hand experience of how the needs of children and young people who are looked after are met within mainstream and specialist settings within RCT, and to gain some insight into the range of specialist services that are available. It was requested that comparisons with provision within other local authorities across Wales and England would be helpful and it was suggested that this could be undertaken at a later date (phase 2) if this was deemed necessary.

1. Mainstream School Provision - Tonyrefail Comprehensive School

Tonyrefail Comprehensive School is a secondary school situated in Tonyrefail. Currently the school has a member of the Senior Leadership Team as the designated teacher for children and young people who are looked after. This member of staff has a number of roles and responsibilities but primarily acts as an advocate for children and young people and an adviser to staff and governors on issues relating to children and young people who are looked after. The designated teacher also ensures that appropriate Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and other records are completed in a timely manner and consistently implemented. Tonyrefail Comprehensive School has secured a dedicated Learning Support Assistant (LSA) for children and young people who are looked after and this post holder has been in post since December 2014. The role has been funded by the school itself and has been developed to provide dedicated intervention and support facilities for pupils who are looked after at the school. Since its inception the dedicated role has raised the profile of this vulnerable group and ensured that dedicated support is in place and their needs are effectively met. It has also enabled carers to be directly involved in individual learning plan targets and for staff to develop positive relationships with those carers.

The working group found the dedicated LSA role to be of value in terms of providing nurturing emotional support and stability to children and young people who are looked after whilst also supporting and enhancing the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) at the school.

2. Specialist Provision - Tai Education Centre

Tai Education Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) located in Pen-Y-Graig which currently provides education for 64 pupils with moderate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. The main aim of the setting is to reintegrate children and young people back into their mainstream placements if at all possible and a significant percentage of the learners have dual placements in Tai and mainstream settings. Children and young people who are looked after attending Tai access bespoke interventions to meet their needs. Their progress is closely monitored and high levels of support and positive reinforcement provided. Teaching and learning within the setting is excellent and recent Estyn inspection outcomes judged the school as being 'excellent' and with 'excellent' prospects for improvement. All children, including those looked after by the

local authority benefit from high quality provision offered within Tai and the approach adopted is a very inclusive one.

The working group noticed the strong focus on the use of data by the PRU for all learners including children and young people who are looked after, attendance and educational/behavioural outcomes are closely monitored in order to ensure early intervention and clear target setting for improvement. It was noted that attendance is excellent among children and young people who are looked after in this setting, with Tai often achieving targets above the local authority average for primary schools.

The working group were informed of the good working relationships that the provision has with other schools, other PRUs and a wide range of partners to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved by children and young people.   There is a strong focus on re-integrating pupils back into mainstream schools. It was evident that early intervention and prompt placement before several school placements are is of benefit to children and young people who are looked after and other pupils so they experience stability in their educational placement and a secure educational base in which to thrive and develop both educational and emotionally.

3. Designated LAC Teacher

From the 1st September 2009 the Governing Bodies of all maintained schools are required under the Children & Young Persons Act 2008 to appoint a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children and young people who are looked after and registered pupils at the school. All schools across RCT have a designated teacher with responsibility for promoting the educational achievements of this cohort and for ensuring that individual needs are well met. This is achieved by ensuring that:

- a smooth transition into school takes place;
- a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place;
- all children and young people who are looked after have access to an identified member of staff;
- confidentiality is maintained;
- meetings are held to promote inclusive practice and to avoid exclusion; and
- children and young people who are looked after have access to extra curricular activities.

Their role beyond the school is also crucial in that they facilitate effective and efficient co-operation with other professionals who work with children and young people in care. The working group were advised that at primary level it is often the Head Teacher or a member of the senior leadership team that has responsibility for children and young people who are looked after and this can result in these members of staff experiencing conflicting demands on their time which can make the designated teacher role difficult to fulfil effectively.

4. Local Authority Support Services

During both site visits it became apparent to the working group that the role of the Access and Inclusion team was one of huge importance and value to the schools.

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Children and young people who are looked after have access to both generic and specialist services within the local authority. This includes services such as the Learning Support; Behaviour Support; Educational Psychology; Youth Engagement and Participation; and Attendance and Wellbeing. This support is further supplemented by access to specialist services for children and young people who are looked after and staff with expertise in the impact of attachment and resilience factors on child development and evidence based best practice approaches in relation to meeting their needs. They also provide a pathway to accessing mental health and other services.
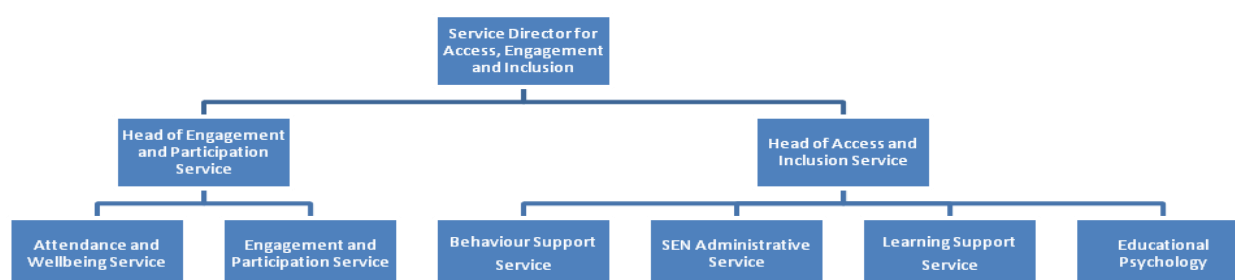
The Access and Inclusion Service consists of 4 integrated services which includes the Behaviour Support Service, Educational Psychology Service and Learning Support Service, and the Special Educational Needs Administrative Service (SENAS). SENAS underpins the work of Access and Inclusion by providing the administration for all placements in specialist provisions, together with the administration associated with statutory assessments and annual reviews. The Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the Engagement and Participation Service also provides support to ensure that learners attend school and engage fully in education and extended educational opportunities.

Schools have a duty to track the progress of all learners and ensure that appropriate provision is made for all learners with SEN, including children and young people who are looked after. If a looked after child or young person's SEN is such that they require interventions at early years/school action or early years/school action plus of the SEN Code of Practice for Wales, then this provision has to be put in place by schools. Referrals are made to the Access and Inclusion Service for children and young people who are looked after with significant needs at school. If additional support is needed to supplement the provision already made by schools then they are required to refer to local cluster group panels. If criteria is met then Additional Needs Funding is provided to support mainstream inclusion.

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The services available act as a crucial link to the schools to support children and young people who are looked after and there are many approaches adopted within the local authority to enhance the capacity of schools to meet the emotional, social and behavioural needs of learners. For example, members of the working group were informed of the Restorative Approaches (RA) work which is being carried out across schools. The Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAIS) project is currently being implemented and involves 7 pilot schools. Pilot schools receive intensive training on RA for Governing Bodies, staff, pupils and parents/carers. It is hoped that within 3-5 years these pilot schools will become centres of excellence and will be able to provide support and training to other schools. This training, alongside other approaches such as Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), Incredible Years Training and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) helps create positive learning environments for developing social, emotional and behavioural skills.

Whilst it was recognised that there is good practice in place at both schools visited by the working group all schools are required to make provision for those pupils who have additional learning needs and this includes children and young people who are looked after. Although not every school provides discreet or designated provision for children and young people who are looked after, all schools are required to support learners with significant SEN. Ultimately the overall performance for children and young people who are looked after rests with the schools themselves although the local authority does provide schools with the specialist support required to enhance the capacity of settings to meet the needs of learners and to enable them to achieve positive outcomes.

5. LA Specialist Services for Children and Young people who are Looked After

The Ymbarel Education team endeavours to reduce the risk of poor educational outcomes for children and young people in care and to enhance the capacity of schools to meet their needs. This is achieved through early intervention and preventative approaches, and in response to direct referrals into the service. Support can include assessment; consultation/advice; training; therapeutic work; and strategic/multi-agency work. Where children are considered at risk, staff contribute to multi-agency assessment and intervention which can involve a range of partners including foster carers, social workers, school staff, health professionals and other agencies both within and outside of the County Borough. Despite the continued growth in the numbers of children and young people who are looked after within the County Borough and the obvious impact this has upon the service, the structure and numbers of staff within the Ymbarel LAC Education Team has remained relatively consistent in recent years. The Ymbarel team currently consists of:-

- 1 x LAC Education Coordinator
- 1.6 x Educational Psychologist for LAC
- 1 x PEP Coordinator and Data Administrator
- 1 x Education Support Worker KS4
- 5 x LAC Educational Support Assistants

The LAC Education Co-ordinator

The LAC Education Co-ordinator provided the working group with an overview of the role and responsibilities associated with the post. Guidance requires local authorities to appoint a LAC Education Co-ordinator whose primary role is to ensure that children and young people who are looked after gain maximum life benefits from educational opportunities. The role of LAC Education Co-ordinator also involves

- The promotion of the education of children and young people who are looked after both within the County Borough and out of the area
- Monitoring the attainment and outcomes of children and young people who are looked after
- Proactive engagement with children and young people who are looked after so that their views are actively sought and heard
- Liaising with other LAC Education Coordinators in other local authorities
- Disseminating good practice and the provision of training
- Attending reviews for looked after children and young people
- Maintaining a list of designated teachers for children and young people who are looked after for each school

Educational Psychologist

The Educational Psychologists for LAC provides specialist advice, support, guidance and training for children and young people who are looked after with more complex needs. The key element of the post is to ensure that the psychological and educational needs of individual child or young person are identified and met, and that this information is shared with relevant partner agencies so as to ensure that appropriate support, interventions and placements are put in place. Training and support is also provided for professionals, including foster carers. Partnership working is at the heart of this key role.

Education Support Workers Assistants

The six education support workers provide support for LAC to improve their educational outcomes through the delivery of effective and targeted interventions. This includes interventions to develop literacy/numeracy skills; and social, emotional and behavioural skills. A recent re-structure within the Access and Inclusion Service has resulted in a change in job descriptions for staff and targeted continued professional development opportunities. This will ensure that the team can support learners with a wider range of needs including speech, language and communication difficulties.

Data on the educational outcomes of children and young people in local authority care is analysed to inform priorities for development and targeted interventions. It can however be very challenging to gather meaningful data for this cohort of learners and which fully captures life experiences and priorities for development. However, it was agreed that despite the differing needs of children and young people who are looked after it is important to identify common data sets that provide insight into the barriers

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faced by them so that schools can access the required services and support to enable these learners to achieve better educational outcomes and thrive.

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SECTION 7: KEY FINDINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP

1. Best Practice and Data Sharing

Not only did the use of data assist the working group to capture the information needed to conduct their work into improving the educational attainment of children and young people who are looked after, they also considered it to be a key driver to ensuring the efficient monitoring of outcomes and a means of informing targeted interventions to overcome the many barriers to learning experienced by children and young people who are looked after. Following the working group's visit to the Pupil Referral Unit it was evident that they made excellent use of their data which in turn provided them with an accurate picture of pupils' needs and abilities, and possible areas for further development.

It was considered by the working group that appropriate data collection concerning educational attainment, achievement and attendance could be better and more efficiently collated and more effectively utilised to ensure targeted support is appropriately provided. Similarly the working group felt that data sharing protocols should allow for effective sharing of data between and across local authorities in respect of out of county placements, to ensure that all children and young people who are looked after are monitored and supported. Likewise it is necessary for the data and information relating to out of county emergency placements to be collated. This would lead to an improved understanding of the triggers leading to placement breakdown and therefore enable preventative action to be taken.

Throughout the review the working group witnessed good practice in schools within the County Borough, to improve the educational attainment of children and young people who are looked after. This included access to appropriate provision and support for children and young people who are looked after, including dedicated provision in some cases; the delivery of a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum; and support to take part in all school activities thus ensuring an inclusive education. It was considered that opportunities for sharing and disseminating good practice and the development of best practice guidance could assist schools in further improving the provision made to children and young people who are looked after. This would further impact positively on behaviour, wellbeing, attendance and achievements.

Member Research/Comments

Members commented on the benefits of schools sharing best practice such as the models in place at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School in particular the action plan developed to implement interventions to improve outcomes for children and young people who are looked after and to identify the resources available to achieve this. The focus on accessing nurture provision and approaches were felt to be positive in encouraging positive outcomes and social inclusion. Members acknowledged the potential for rolling out these approaches County Borough wide and which could be adapted to suit the needs of the individual schools.

It was recognised that there is good practice in place at both schools visited by the working group. Members of the working group noted that the PRU 'make excellent use

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of data, and attendance and outcomes are measured more closely in order to progress and assist early intervention'

It was clear that it can be challenging to gather meaningful data for this cohort that captures the life experiences of children and young people who are looked after. However, it was also agreed that despite their differing needs it is important to identify common data sets that give us an insight into the barriers faced by children and young people who are looked after so that schools can make appropriate provision and access the required services and support to enable children and young people who are looked after to achieve better educational outcomes

2. Good Quality Placements

Research tells us that good matching processes are associated with better outcomes for looked after children and young people. Key messages from best practice determine that a range of good quality placements is vital in meeting the needs of children and young people. Data tells us that out of the 650 children and young people who are looked after within Rhondda Cynon Taf, the majority of them (515) were placed with foster carers. Foster care is generally the most beneficial option for the majority of children and therefore Rhondda Cynon Taf have developed a salaried, supported role whereby foster carers receive regular advice, support and supervision from a range of professionals and support groups. However, it is considered that greater support measures should continue to extend into foster carers homes to prevent breakdowns in placements, although it was recognised that both Education and Children's Services staff provide support for foster carers in the home context.

As previously acknowledged multiple placements can have a detrimental impact upon children and young people who are looked after in terms of their educational attainment and their long term prospects. Outcomes are more positive if children and young people who are looked after have continuity and stability in care. An increase in placement choices for children and young people who are looked after can lead to improved matching which can reduce the chances of breakdowns. Providing children and young people who are looked after with the opportunity to express their views with regard to their care plans and take part in their reviews ensures their voices are heard. This empowers the child or young person and gives them a sense of security and direction.

Members Research/Comments

Outcomes are more positive if a child or young person who is looked after has continuity in care and stability and focus needs to be placed on ensuring continuity whenever possible.

3. Personal Education Plans (PEP)

Welsh Government: Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future Guidance (2007) states that Local Authorities are required under the Children Act 2004 to ensure that all

children of statutory school age in their care have a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is designed to establish clear targets and actions to respond effectively to each child's needs and provide a continuous record of their achievements. It is intended to be the overarching education plan which should include reference to all other existing education plans such as Individual Education/Behaviour Plans. It is vital that a PEP is established for every child and young person looked after who will undoubtedly encounter a number of placements and school transfers over time which captures the child's educational history and any other special needs.

It was considered by the working group that the PEP represents the crucial piece of the jigsaw for children and young people who are looked after especially when moving from one placement to another and particularly out of county. It was also considered essential that 'information sharing meetings' consisting of key partners would ensure that all information regarding children and young people who are looked after is readily available and maintained properly and that a mechanism to deal with any late PEPs by means of a graduated response should be in place.

Members Research/ Comments

The lack of readily available information was considered to be the reason for the delay in completing the Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 days by some schools. This was a concern to the working group and seen as a barrier to the smooth transition to a new school setting. It was agreed by the working group that better tracking of children and young people who are looked after from one placement to another could help identify where there are gaps.

4. Out of County Placements

Out of county placements are provided for a number of reasons e.g. due to emergency safeguarding issues, access to specialist therapeutic provisions and on occasion due to a lack of capacity locally. They will only be considered by RCT if suitable care placements within the County Borough cannot be found. A Multi Agency Placement Panel (MAPP) has the overall responsibility of discussing and deciding on the most appropriate placements and will only place out of county as a last resort. Children's Services and Education also proactively seek to return children and young people who are looked after to the County Borough whenever possible. In line with the Belongings Regulations when out of county placements are made the host authority is responsible for providing education provision and therefore RCT is not influential in the decision making process with regard to ensuring the most effective provision is made. It is often the case that specialist provisions can be difficult to secure quickly and this can result in difficulties.

The working group considered the importance of convening information sharing meetings with key partners within 20 days of children and young people who are looked after joining a new school and the statutory obligation to complete a PEP within 20 days of entering the care system, joining a new school or changing school (not due to transition). They concluded that communication needs to be improved and arrangements strengthened between all agencies involved in the transfer of children

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and young people who are looked after to out of county placements and when young people arrive in RCT as a result of a change in care arrangements or school.

Members Research/Comments

Members commented on the provision of specialist educational support that out of county children and young people who are looked after are sometimes unable to access readily and promptly when placed out of county. Concern was also raised about the lack of information that is also sometimes available to officers within RCT when children and young people who are the responsibility of other local authorities are newly placed within this local authority. Access to information and good multi-agency communication is essential if we are to establish a clear understanding of the needs of learners and ensure that the provision made is fit for purpose. This applies to both newly placed RCT children in other local authorities, and new arrivals in county.

5. Designated LAC Teacher

The role of designated teacher for children and young people is pivotal in ensuring their needs effectively met, educational outcomes are improved and school based staff have a clear understanding of the challenges faced by children and young people who are looked after. The working group found that within Rhondda Cynon Taf the role of the designated teacher for children and young people who are looked after at primary level is frequently undertaken by the Head Teacher. This was a concern as this role is clearly a demanding one and the capacity of this member of staff to focus intensively on improving the outcomes of children and young people who are looked after may be limited.

The working group was mindful that the role of the designated teacher for children and young people who are looked after needed to be allocated to a member of staff with the time and capacity to focus intensively on improving outcomes for them. It was considered that further improving training and guidance on this issue would be helpful.

Members Research/Comments

It was noted that not all schools have a specific and dedicated member of staff to provide learning or pastoral support solely for children and young people who are looked after as they have the same entitlement to support as all other children. However, it was also noted that all settings will have a designated teacher who has responsibility for children and young people who are looked after but not all settings will have children looked after.

As Members of the working group were informed that the designated teacher for children and young people who are looked after was often the Head Teacher at primary level it was felt that some consideration should be given to strongly advising schools to ensure that a member of staff other than the Head Teacher is empowered to undertake this role if at all possible. Members felt that the role of the dedicated teacher for children and young people who are looked after was paramount to improving their outcomes.

6. Good School Attendance

Attendance has a major impact on educational performance and the correlation between attendance and attainment has been well documented. It was evident to the working group from the visits to the educational settings within the County Borough that children and young people who are looked after are consistently achieving higher attendance rates than those pupils who are not. This demonstrates the commitment of schools and carers have to ensuring attendance in education settings is a priority. It is also a reflection that schools are endeavouring to keep pupils within school settings rather than moving towards exclusions when challenges are faced. In view of the instability experienced by so many children and young people who are looked after the positive trend of good school attendance is vitally important so that that they access good role models in school, good teaching and learning, and have opportunities to develop positive relationships with peers.

The importance of remaining engaged in school is key if outcomes for children and young people who are looked after are going to be improved.

During their visit to the one of the educational settings it was clear for the working group to see that the behaviour of children and young people who are looked after in the PRU was excellent with very low numbers of days lost through fixed term exclusions. There had been no permanent exclusions for a considerable period as pupils were learning to manage their own behaviour through a series of effective policies and procedures in place at the school. For many pupils attending the PRU this was the first time they had attended school regularly.

The working group learned through their visits to schools that children and young people who are looked after often found their school setting to be a source of comfort and security and their school experience was positive despite their difficulties and backgrounds. Once again the working group was mindful of the multiple disadvantages for children and young people who are looked after including living in poverty, exposure to abuse, multiple placement breakdowns and family separation whilst considering the need to close the gap between the educational outcomes of children and young people who are looked after within RCT.

Members Research/Comments

The positive actions of the schools to keep children and young people who are looked after within schools and not exclude pupils for challenging behaviour were noted.

7. Consistent Approaches and Access to Support

It was apparent to the working group that a consistent approach to supporting and caring for children and young people who are looked after at every level is paramount. Such was the impact of the information relating to attachment issues from the Council's Educational Psychologist on the working group that it was seen as being fundamental that all individuals involved in the lives of children and young people who are looked after should have an understanding of the importance of attachment and resilience factors on child development. It was considered that improved training to schools, key

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professionals and foster carers on attachment issues and effective intervention strategies could improve the care of children and young people who are looked after and positively influence their educational outcomes. It was considered crucial that all schools access training in relation to meeting the needs of children and young people who are looked after and access the services provided by the Council's Education & Lifelong Learning Directorate. Ultimately access to good and consistent support, and improved communication would positively promote the educational outcomes of children and young people who are looked after.

Members Research/Comments

Children and young people who are looked after experience diverse barriers to learning which can adversely impact on their ability to learn

The working group emphasised that the one essential factor is having access to the right support, care and guidance to thrive. Access to appropriately trained staff that are well versed in the needs of children and young people who are looked after is vitally important.

CONCLUSION

During the period the working group has been in place it has become increasingly evident that there is a great deal of passion, dedication and hard work among the key support and teaching staff involved with children and young people who are looked after in RCT. On several occasions, the working group witnessed many examples where the support and commitment of dedicated staff had contributed to the improvements made in the educational attainment of children and young people who are looked after. The working group is pleased to be able to acknowledge and recognise this positive work.

Nonetheless some clear themes emerged from the work of the group which need to be addressed in a co-ordinated and planned way to improve the educational attainment of children and young people who are looked after in RCT. It was considered that improving the outcomes of children and young people who are looked after should be a shared responsibility and schools need to work collaboratively and in partnership with key agencies, organisations, parents/carers to ensure that improvements are achieved.

The case studies served to highlight the intensity of the input and intervention work required by the local authority and other key partners to meet the needs of children and young people who are looked after and to achieve positive outcomes. Other messages include the importance of securing good quality and stable, local placements for children and young people who are looked after where possible but the working group recognised that in reality it was not always possible or practical given that some children and young people who are looked after require highly specialist out of county placements. It was considered that under the circumstances effective communication and information sharing meetings were crucial to ensuring a well supported transition. Likewise improvements to the Personal Education Plans (PEP) to be completed within the 20 school days were considered to be essential in order to keep records up to date and current, and ensure appropriate school based support and intervention.

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It was considered that accurate use of indicators and outcome measures is required so that the progress of children and young people who are looked after can be mapped and gaps in progress identified and addressed. Through the effective interrogation of data it was considered that resources and support can be more effectively targeted.

The working group has identified a total of 6 recommendations for the Executive to consider and where necessary implement. The group believe that these recommendations will further strengthen the services provided for the benefit of children and young people who are looked after of Rhondda Cynon Taf both now and in the future.

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SECTION 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A review of the current PEP system to be undertaken with focus placed on identifying the barriers to the timely completion of the PEPs. An action plan should be devised to address this issue and existing processes and procedures reviewed. In order to achieve more effective PEPs, a robust graduated response to challenging schools and agencies that do not complete PEPs in a timely manner should be re-devised and consistently implemented to ensure improvement. Further training and guidance for schools and Social Workers would be helpful in improving the understanding of those involved of the value and importance of PEPs to the lives of children and young people who are looked after.

2. Development of a training programme for Designated Teachers for LAC, frontline education staff and foster carers on the needs of LAC and support required to improve their educational outcomes is recommended. This should also be provided for Governors so that Governing Bodies and school staff are clear about the roles and responsibilities of schools.

3. An education network for Designated Teachers for LAC to be established to facilitate the sharing of good practice and to provide a forum for raising awareness and knowledge about supporting outcomes for LAC. A possible focus for discussion should include the role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher and the need for this post holder to have sufficient capacity and time to undertake this role well. Network to be led by the LAC Education Co-ordinator.

4. Further improvements to be made to the collation and interrogation of data used to track and monitor outcomes of LAC, both locally and against national benchmarking data. Data to be used to inform priorities for further development and timely targeted support. Consideration should also be given to collating data on the destinations of care leves at the age of 19.

5. The LA needs to ensure that there are clear processes in place for enabling schools to access grant funding for looked after children once the submitted plan to CSC is approved. Robust mechanisms should also be established for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the funding on outcomes for looked after children and young people.

6. In view of the obvious overlap between Education and Children's Services and the new scrutiny arrangements, it is recommended that in future consideration is given to streamlining the datasets collated across agencies and submitting a joint report to Scrutiny on the outcomes for looked after children so that the education and social care dimension can be considered in tandem.

Appendix 1

Table 1:   No. Of Children Looked After by local authority as at 31st March 2014

		Total looked after children as at 31st March 2014	Per 10,000
Wales		5755	91
Wales	Isle of Anglesey	75	57
	Gwynedd	185	78
	Conwy	165	75
	Denbighshire	165	85
	Flintshire	215	66
	Wrexham	215	73
	Powys	150	59
	Ceredigion	75	61
	Pembrokeshire	125	50
	Carmarthenshire	245	66
	Swansea	540	114
	Neath Port Talbot	470	168
	Bridgend	410	142
	Vale of Glamorgan	185	68
	Cardiff	610	84
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	**650**	**130**
	Merthyr Tydfil	175	140
	Caerphilly	275	71
	Blaenau Gwent	145	102
	Torfaen	295	152
	Monmouthshire	105	56
	Newport	285	86

(Source: Stats Wales SSDA903) Published September 2014.
 LAC as at 31st March 2014

(Source: per 10,000 Stats Wales Office for National Statistics mid year population estimates) published September 2014.

Table 2: Educational Outcomes

Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicators; Key Stage 3 Core Subject Indicators; Level 1 Threshold: 5 A* – G GCSEs; Level 2 Threshold - 5 A* - C GCSEs.

	2011/12 * RCT * Reported data is for previous academic year	**2011/12 * All Wales * Reported data is for previous academic year**	2012/13 * RCT * Reported data is for previous academic year	**2012/13 * All Wales * Reported data is for previous academic year**	2013/14 * RCT * Reported data is for previous academic year	**2013/14 * All Wales * Reported data is for previous academic year**
KS 2 CSI	38% (9/24)	**48%**	26% (7/27)	**46%**	38% (9/24)	**52%**
KS 3 CSI	26% (9/34)	**26%**	30% (8/27)	**30%**	19% (6/31)	**37%**
5 A*-G GCSE Level 1	34%	**39%**	41%	**35%**	25%	**37%**
5 A*-C GCSE Level 2	*	**12%**	15%	**10%**	*	**12%**

Reported data is for previous academic year.

(Source: Welsh Government Statistical Release: Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales (April 2013-March 2014 – published 9/2014)

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Table 3: Care Leavers on their 19th Birthday during the year ending 31st March 2014 by LA Qualifications and Measure

		Percentage of children					Total number leaving care (1)
		Total number leaving care (1)					
		No qualifications (1)	At least one qualification, including vocational qualifications (1)			At least one qualification, including vocational qualifications (1)	
		No qualifications (1)	At least one A* to G at GCSE or GNVQ (1)	At least five A* to G at GCSE (1)	At least five A* to C at GCSE (1)		
Wales		28	58	37	12	72	100
Wales	Isle of Anglesey	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Gwynedd	39	54	50	21	61	100
	Conwy	34	55	38	*	66	100
	Denbighshire	*	47	33	*	73	100
	Flintshire	31	56	50	*	69	100
	Wrexham	50	46	29	*	50	100
	Powys	*	83	75	42	83	100
	Ceredigion	42	50	*	*	58	100
	Pembrokeshire	*	71	33	*	86	100
	Carmarthenshire	18	75	39	29	82	100
	Swansea	37	48	27	16	63	100
	Neath Port Talbot	45	55	45	*	55	100
	Bridgend	28	66	41	*	72	100
	Vale of Glamorgan	24	64	36	*	76	100
	Cardiff	38	53	38	8	62	100
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	**22**	**48**	**25**	*	**78**	**100**
	Merthyr Tydfil	*	70	45	*	90	100
	Caerphilly	14	60	47	12	86	100
	Blaenau Gwent	*	92	58	*	92	100
	Torfaen	*	69	35	*	85	100
	Monmouthshire	*	80	60	*	87	100
	Newport	*	52	21	*	86	100

*** *Raw Data has been rounded to the nearest 5 due to disclosure issues***

(Source: Stats Wales: OC1 statistical return on educational qualifications of care leavers) published September 2014.

Table 4: Care leavers on their 19th birthday during year ending 31 March 2014 by local authority and activity

		All (1)					Unknown (1) .	Not applicable (1) .	
		Young person engaged in education, training or employment (1)		Young person engaged in education, training or employment (1)	Young person not in education, employment or training (1) .	All (1)			
		Young person engaged full time in education, training or employment (1)	Young person engaged part time in education, training or employment (1)						% NEETS
Wales		190	45	235	195	425	*	*	45.35
Wales	Isle of Anglesey	*	*	*	*	5	*	*	*
	Gwynedd	10	*	10	5	15	*	*	33.33
	Conwy	10	*	10	*	10	*	*	*
	Denbighshire	15	*	15	*	15	*	*	*
	Flintshire	5	*	5	5	10	*	*	50.00
	Wrexham	*	*	*	10	15	*	*	*
	Powys	5	*	10	5	15	*	*	33.33
	Ceredigion	*	*	5	*	5	*	*	*
	Pembrokeshire	5	*	5	10	15	*	*	66.67
	Carmarthenshire	10	*	15	*	15	*	*	*
	Swansea	10	*	15	15	30	*	*	50.00
	Neath Port Talbot	10	*	15	10	20	*	*	40.00
	Bridgend	5	*	5	15	20	*	*	75.00
	Vale of Glamorgan	5	5	10	15	25	*	*	60.00
	Cardiff	20	*	25	20	45	*	*	44.44
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	**15**	**10**	**25**	**10**	**40**	*	*	**28.57**
	Merthyr Tydfil	5	*	10	10	20	*	*	50.00
	Caerphilly	10	5	20	10	30	*	*	33.33
	Blaenau Gwent	*	*	*	10	15	*	*	*
	Torfaen	5	*	5	10	15	*	*	66.67
	Monmouthshire	5	*	5	5	10	*	*	50.00
	Newport	15	*	15	15	25	*	*	50.00

Data has been rounded to the nearest 5 due to disclosure issues

Source: OC3 - Statistical return on care leavers on their 19th birthday (published Sept 14)

Table 5: SEN of LAC as at 31st March 2014

	2011 RCT	2011 All Wales	2012 RCT	2012 All Wales	2013 RCT	2013 All Wales	2014 RCT
% LAC at School Action/School Action Plus	48%	43%	46%	45%	43%	47%	48%
% LAC Statemented	13%	21%	22%	21%	21%	19%	19%

(Source: Children in Need Census Data 2014 Table 13 published February 2015)

Table 6: School Placement Type of Children who are Looked After and all to All Learners Educated within RCT as at October 2014

RCT Setting	LAC in RCT	All RCT Learners
Mainstream	87%	97.6%
Special & PRU	9%	1.51%
Learning Support Class	4%	0.89%

Source: Internal data

Table 7: Children looked after at 31 March 2014 by local authority, number of placements during year and measure

		Number of Children with 3 or more placements during year (1)	Percentage of Children with 3 or more placements during year (1)
Wales		480	8
Wales	Isle of Anglesey	5	8
	Gwynedd	10	5
	Conwy	10	6
	Denbighshire	15	10
	Flintshire	10	6
	Wrexham	30	14
	Powys	5	4
	Ceredigion	10	13
	Pembrokeshire	20	15
	Carmarthenshire	30	12
	Swansea	40	7
	Neath Port Talbot	30	6
	Bridgend	35	9
	Vale of Glamorgan	20	10
	Cardiff	55	9
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	**45**	**7**
	Merthyr Tydfil	5	3
	Caerphilly	25	9
	Blaenau Gwent	15	11
	Torfaen	20	7
	Monmouthshire	10	11
	Newport	30	11

(Source: Stats Wales SSDA903) Statistical return on children looked after published September 2014.

Table 8: Personal Education Plan (PEP) – Percentage of children and young people who are looked after with an up-to-date PEP within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school in RCT was as follows:

Financial Year	Actual	Target
2009/10	77.77	70
2010/11	86.13	70
2011/12	70.89	70
2012/13	72.08	86
2013/14	63.3	80

(Source: Local PI)

Table 9: *PEP Data of Children Looked After by Local Authority and Measure as 31 March 2014*

	The number of children of compulsory school age looked after at 31 March who have experienced one or more changes of school, which were not due to transitional arrangements, in the 12 months to 31 March	The number of children of compulsory school age looked after at 31 March	Number of times children looked after during the year had a personal education plan within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school in the year ending 31 March	Number of times a child enters care during the year or, for children already looked after, the number of times a child who is looked after joins a new school during the year ending 31 March	Total number of PEPS issued	% of PEPs issued within 20 days of entering care system, joining a new school or changed school (not due to transition)
Wales	495	3575	759	1210	1254	64.92
Blaenau Gwent	11	83	28	28	39	53.01
Bridgend	32	255	69	122	101	60.39
Caerphilly	18	218	40	42	58	73.39
Cardiff	44	331	51	213	95	71.30
Carmarthenshire	25	173	56	76	81	53.18
Ceredigion	4	48	..	..		
Conwy	10	115	25	27	35	69.57
Denbighshire	8	99	8	36	16	83.84
Flintshire	18	122	17	30	35	71.31
Gwynedd	26	114	35	40	61	46.49
Isle of Anglesey	10	50	27	30	37	26.00
Merthyr Tydfil	13	116	46	49	59	49.14
Monmouthshire	8	73	27	40	35	52.05
Neath Port Talbot	42	268	18	21	60	77.61
Newport	17	163	41	43	58	64.42
Pembrokeshire	17	77	22	24	39	49.35
Powys	19	108	41	48	60	44.44
Rhondda Cynon Taf	**53**	**393**	**95**	**150**	**148**	**62.34**
Swansea	58	341	52	64	110	67.74
Torfaen	24	202	19	36	43	78.71
Vale of Glamorgan	18	110	24	60	42	61.82
Wrexham	20	116	18	31	38	67.24

(Source: Stats Wales: performance management of children's social services. (PMI) data collection, Welsh Government, published September 2014)

Table 10: School Attendance by children and young people who are looked after pupils in Primary Schools

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Primary School	2012/2013	2013/2014
LAC Pupil Attendance	95.2%	95.9%
Non LAC Pupil Attendance	93.4%	94.5%
% Difference in Attendance levels for the period	1.8%	1.4%

(Source: Local PI)

Table 11: School Attendance by children and young people who are looked after in Secondary Schools

Secondary School	2012/2013	2013/2014
LAC Pupil Attendance	94.1%	94.4%
Non LAC Pupil Attendance	92%	93.2%
% Difference in Attendance levels for the period	2.1%	1.2%

Cohort for matched LAC pupils for this comparison is small and identified through January PLASC so they differ from current LAC pupils

(Source: Local PI)

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Table 12: School Attendance of children looked after by local authority and measure for 2013/14 (financial year)

		Total number of sessions missed by looked after children in primary schools in the most recent school year whilst looked after	Total number of sessions looked after children in primary schools could have attended in the most recent school year whilst looked after	Primary LAC Attendance %	Total number of sessions missed by looked after children in secondary schools in the most recent school year whilst looked after	Total number of sessions looked after children in secondary schools could have attended in the most recent school year whilst looked after	Secondary LAC Attendance %
Wales		24956	512312	95.1%	42224.5	500473	91.6%
Wales	Isle of Anglesey	578	11780	95.1%	792	8740	90.9%
	Gwynedd	535	19455	97.3%	1466	24503	94.0%
	Conwy	1086	19410	94.4%	3033	27843	89.1%
	Denbighshire	975	13238	92.6%	1458	16078	90.9%
	Flintshire	1278	23488	94.6%	1318	15991	91.8%
	Wrexham	703	12756	94.5%	618	11240	94.5%
	Powys	677	14878	95.4%	1632	16835	90.3%
	Ceredigion	198	9199	97.8%	..	..	
	Pembrokeshire	791	13650	94.2%	2695	24960	89.2%
	Carmarthenshire	1405	24782	94.3%	2044	22547	90.9%
	Swansea	2319	39298	94.1%	3289	39298	91.6%
	Neath Port Talbot	2991	43349	93.1%	3844	37439	89.7%
	Bridgend	1634	37590	95.7%	2802	34230	91.8%
	Vale of Glamorgan	970	16866	94.2%	2765	22309	87.6%
	Cardiff	1474	27727	94.7%	2276	26693	91.5%
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	**3159**	**68893**	**95.4%**	**2567**	**40336**	**93.6%**
	Merthyr Tydfil	387	14994	97.4%	463.5	17067	97.3%
	Caerphilly	955	23850	96.0%	3088	33441	90.8%
	Blaenau Gwent	596	13774	95.7%	835	12589	93.4%
	Torfaen	1467	37087	96.0%	2486	29101	91.5%
	Monmouthshire	359	8754	95.9%	913	13539	93.3%
	Newport	419	17494	97.6%	1840	25694	92.8%

Table 13: School Exclusions of Children Looked by Local Authority and measure 2013/14 (financial year)

		The number of school age children looked after at 31 March who had been continuously looked after for more than 12 months and were permanently excluded from school during the previous academic year (1)	The number of school age children looked after at 31 March who had been continuously looked after for more than 12 months (1)	The total number of days for which looked after children of school age were excluded through fixed-period exclusions during the previous academic year	The number of school age children looked after at 31 March who had been continuously looked after for more than 12 months and had a fixed-period exclusion at any time during the previous academic	Percentage of LAC pupils who have been excluded	Average length of exclusion
Wales		*	3055	1830	271	8.9%	1.7
Wales	Isle of Anglesey	0	40	*	*		
	Gwynedd	0	110	*	*		
	Conwy	0	85	*	*		
	Denbighshire	0	80	*	*		
	Flintshire	0	100	22	6	6.0%	4.5
	Wrexham	0	105	59	8	7.6%	1.8
	Powys	*	100	68	9	9.0%	1.5
	Ceredigion	0	40	*	*		
	Pembrokeshire	0	70	*	*		
	Carmarthenshire	0	140	30	6	4.3%	4.7
	Swansea	0	290	156	16	5.5%	1.9
	Neath Port Talbot	0	260	68	17	6.5%	3.8
	Bridgend	0	215	200	31	14.4%	1.1
	Vale of Glamorgan	*	100	*	*		
	Cardiff	0	290	224	34	11.7%	1.3
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	**0**	**330**	**167**	**27**	**8.2%**	**2.0**
	Merthyr Tydfil	*	110	31	7	6.4%	3.5
	Caerphilly	0	160	178	24	15.0%	0.9
	Blaenau Gwent	0	75	65	12	16.0%	1.2
	Torfaen	0	160	150	16	10.0%	1.1
	Monmouthshire	0	45	*	*		
	Newport	0	150	178	23	15.3%	0.8

Source	Performance management of children's social services (PM1) data collection, Welsh Government (published Sept 2014)

* Data has been rounded to the nearest 5 for disclosure reasons

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

A REVIEW OF THE PLACEMENT COSTS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE

RHONDDA CYNON TAF

TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

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FOREWORD

Looked After Children are amongst the most vulnerable in society. They have usually suffered from some form of abuse whether it is emotional or physical and there is a higher incidence of mental illness in Looked After Children than the general population. We as a Council have a duty as corporate parents to ensure that not only that they are safe but to ensure that their emotional needs are being met and that they have the same life chances as any other child. For this to happen the Council must have a range of good quality placement options which meet the needs of the children who because of their earlier experiences will often need specialist support.

The Council has a long history of supporting Children's Services and has done its best to protect these services from the worst of the financial constraints being felt across the Authority. However, the high number of Looked After Children in the County Borough does pose a financial challenge and we have to ensure that the Council is getting best value for its money without compromising on the quality of care. It is also vital that children are able to access the Mental Health services that they need in a timely fashion to prevent further escalation of behavioural problems leading to a greater degree of specialist care being required following family breakdown.

Ultimately, the best option is to reduce the number of children in care and there are signs that the preventative work being put in place is starting to have an effect on the Looked After Children numbers. However in the meantime we to have ensure that we have the best possible mix of placement options available to us.

Alongside the work of this Group, the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee has been undertaking its own review in respect of the Educational Attainment of Looked After Children. It is hoped that together, these two reports will support the improvement of our practice as Corporate Parents

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) Margaret Davies
Chair of the Working Group

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1.   **<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>**

1.   Against expectations, there was a 4.4% reduction in LAC figures during 204/15. It is therefore recommended that the service aims for year on year reduction with specific targets being set each year.

2.   It is recommended that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee monitors the impact of the introduction of the new Regional Adoption Service.

3.   It is recommended that the Children's Commissioning Consortium be asked to produce an annual report of its work and achievements to be presented to the Council's Corporate Parenting Board.

4.   It is also recommended that the Council supports the Children's Commissioning Consortium in its aim to attract more specialist placement providers to Wales.

5.   It is recommended that Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee monitor the measures put in place to maximise the occupancy levels of both in house residential and foster care placements.

6.   It is recommended that Children's Services considers how it can improve its support to current foster carers, if appropriate, drawing on the skills of others within the services such as residential care staff, staff from the Miskin Service.

7.   It is recommended that Children's Services develop specific foster carers with the skills and training to manage those children with more acute behavioural problems.

8.   It is recommended that the Executive, through the Local Service Board, takes every opportunity to support the allocation of resources to ensure that the primary health care needs of children and young people are being met and also support the progression of the development of the Community Intensive Therapy Team.

9.   It is recommended that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee invite a representative of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to meet with Members in approximately 12 months time to consider what difference the new funding arrangements announced by the Welsh Government have made.

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2. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The number of Looked After Children has grown rapidly over recent years posing a key financial risk to the Council. Whilst the rapid increase has slowed over the last couple of years, the numbers remain high. At the end of quarter 1 in 2009 there were 441 children 'looked after' by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council but this had increased to 649 by 30th June 2014, an increase of over 41% in a 5 year period. This is much higher than the national average increase of 23%[1] over the last 5 years.

2.1.2 In his report to the Council's Cabinet Performance and Resources Committee on 23rd September 2014, the Group Director, Corporate Services reported that the average weekly cost of external residential placements had increased during the first quarter from £2,917 at 31st March 2014, to £3,098 at 30th June 2014; and attributable to 5 additional high cost residential care placements during this period.

2.1.3 At the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 8th October 2014, Members noted the £248k overspend for the Looked After Children's service for Quarter 1 The Committee concluded that if this pattern was left unchecked it could result in an end of year overspend of approximately £1m and therefore resolved to form a working group to scrutinise in greater depth the factors influencing the Looked After Children's budget by comparing 'in-house' and 'out of county' accommodation costs and the services provided by 'out of county' placements.

2.2 Terms of Reference and Scope

2.2.1 The Terms of Reference and scope of the review were as follows:

Terms of Reference:

1. To ensure that the Council is obtaining best value for its expenditure in relation to the placement costs of Looked After Children.

2. To advise the Executive of any measures for improvement.

Scope:

- To compare the costs of 'in-house' residential care with that provided by external providers of residential care used by the Council both 'out of county' and within the locality.
- To consider any best practice arrangements undertaken by other local authorities

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[1] Statswales – First Release, 240914, Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales 2013-14

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- To gain an understanding of the context behind the decisions to place 'out of county'.
- To consider the range of specialist services provided by external establishments in relation to outcomes for children – are their needs being met?
- To consider what measures are in place to ensure that the costs of specialist education and health needs are fairly apportioned.
- To consider the associated costs which incur when children and young people are placed 'out of county'.
- To consider what measures are in place to reduce these placements.
- To consider what measures could be put in place to deliver specialist services locally.

2.3   **Methodology**

2.3.1   The Membership of the Working Group comprised of County Borough Councillors (Mrs) M E Davies, S Evans, S Lloyd, (Mrs) A Roberts, (Mrs) S Rees, R W Smith, B Stephens and L G Walker.

2.3.2   The Working Group met on 4 occasions and considered a range of written evidence which included Stats Wales comparative data for Looked After Children, Looked After Children unit costs and the findings of the NAfW Children & Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

2.3.3   The Working Group also received representations from the Service Director, Children's Services, the Head of Financial Reporting, Community & Children's Services, Ms Alison Smale, Regional Commissioning Manager for the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru and Dr Claire Ball, Clinical Director for the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

3.   LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – PATHWAYS INTO CARE

3.1   The Council has a legal duty to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from harm. When it is safe to do so and in the best interests of the child, the aim is to keep children with their families. However, despite the Council's work to support families, the demand for services has continued to grow and in 2013/14 there were 650 children in our care, which was 29 more than 2012/14.

3.2   Looked After Children or Children in Care are those children being looked after by a local authority who are subject to a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and also those looked after by a voluntary agreement with their parents under section 20 of the Act. Children and young people from overseas can become 'looked after' if they have no one with parental responsibility in this country. These children may be 'looked after' by family members, foster carers or staff in a residential children's home.

3.3   Local Authorities have a duty under 22 (G) of the Children Act 1989 (amended by the 2008 Act) to ensure there is sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of their looked after children.   Sufficient accommodation must be provided 'where reasonably practical' (lack of resources is not considered a barrier), and having 'regard to the benefit of having a number of providers and a range of accommodation'.

3.4   In undertaking the review, the Working Group was keen to understand the reasons for children being 'looked after' and the factors which can have an influence and the Group was informed of the findings of research which had been commissioned by the All Wales Heads of Children's Services, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Association of Directors of Social Services which sought to provide insight into why local authorities with similar levels of need, have different Looked After Children populations.

3.5   This research has established that there are a number of key factors which influence Looked After Children numbers, such as the demographic and socio-economic profile of an area. Areas of deprivation tend to have higher Looked After Children numbers as do areas which have a large number of single parent households. Financial restraint and welfare reform can also give rise to increasing need and a reduction in resources. Media reporting of high profile cases can also have an influence on the number of referrals received by social services.

3.6   It is acknowledged that Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the most deprived communities in Wales. Unemployment is high with nearly 24% of households being 'workless', which means that the adults living there do not work. In these areas, almost 23% of these 'workless' households have dependent children.[2] Even for those who are in work, income is generally low and over a quarter of children in the County Borough live in a family on a low income.

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[2] StatsWales – figures relate to 31st December 2013

3.7 Historically, teenage pregnancy rates have been high in the South Wales Valleys. It has recently been announced that the teenage pregnancy rate for the Cwm Taf area has fallen by 48% since 2008 which is encouraging but for a number of years Rhondda Cynon Taf's Teenage Pregnancy rate has consistently been one of the highest in Wales and despite the progress made since then the impact will still be felt for some years yet.

3.8 However, the research also pointed to other factors which can affect numbers which are more in the control of local authorities, such as strategy and leadership, prevention and early intervention, social work practice and outcome based performance management. The Service Director, Children's Services informed the Working Group that it was his belief that 'workforce' should also be added to this list as a skilled workforce is vitally important. In the past difficulties in the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of qualified social workers has been an additional factor.

3.9 Taking into account these key issues, the Service Director informed the Working Group that the Council has a Looked After Children Action Plan in place which is based on evidenced good practice and the recommendations of the research referred to above as well as the financial considerations. This strategy has good corporate and political support and is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. There is a new targeted prevention strategy in place and a remodelling of Children's Services underway. A new Risk Model will be implemented in order to achieve consistency and good practice with effective quality assurance to ensure a clear outcome focus to casework and which will include the voice of the children and young people and their families. Underpinning this work is the development of a new Workforce Strategy. These two developments are interconnected and it is particularly important that the Workforce Strategy contributes directly to achieving the service vision articulated within the Children's Services Model. The Children's Services Management Team are committed to the aim of reducing the statutory workload of the authority which will have beneficial effects for children and young people, local communities, the authority and the children's services workforce. The re-modelling exercise and the evolving partnership approach to developing coordinated prevention and early intervention services should contribute directly towards achieving this aim.

3.10 The new targeted prevention strategy will ensure that there is a continuum of intervention and support for families. The Service will build on the range of support already in place such as Team Around the Family (TAF), Flying Start, Families First, Miskin Project, Rapid Intervention & Response Team, Youth Justice Prevention and the Integrated Family Support Team. A key element to safeguarding is the development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which is based at Pontypridd Police Station. This brings together staff from a range of agencies working together to become a first point of contact for professionals in relation to vulnerable children and adults. The new unit has staff from Health, Children's and Adult services, Police, Probation, Education and the Emergency Duty Team who are now working together at the unit. The MASH receives all referrals for children & young people where there are safeguarding concerns. The aim is to enable all services that work

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with individual families to have a larger amount of information with which to make decisions.

3.11 The Working Group was provided with a demonstration of the Families First Windscreen Model which demonstrates the pathways into and out of care. The need for a skilled workforce was re-enforced to recognise and react to changing situations and enable families to access the right support. The Working Group acknowledged the importance of these services and interventions as their success could reduce the need for placements and the associated budgetary pressures.
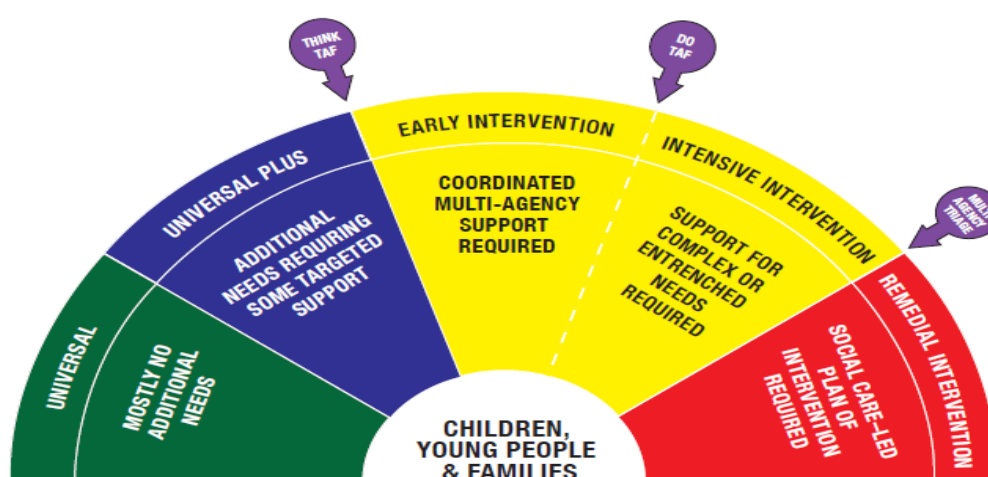
3.12 To enhance their understanding, the Working Group also considered a case study which highlighted the complex nature of the work and the type of behaviour and circumstance that can lead to a child needing a specialist out of county placement. It also led Members to question the current model of delivery for children's mental health services.

3.13 Members were informed on the wide range of partnership work including a Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board and were also informed of the positive feedback from the Judiciary with regard to the operation of the Public Law Outline (PLO) which has resulted in the average time for child care cases to go through the court process to half.

3.14 It was explained to the Working Group how a move toward more outcome based performance management will be necessary to provide an insight into how effectively vulnerable children and young people are protected and supported, to improve and change practice and improve and change commissioning which will lead to a simplified assessment process and reduced bureaucracy.

3.15 In relation to the workforce, the Service Director, Children's Services informed the Working Group that rising statutory caseloads and the increasing numbers of Looked After Children had increased pressure on staff and that whilst

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staffing had increased it had not kept pace with the rate of increase in statutory work. This had placed considerable strain on the Authority in terms of being able to allocate all statutory work to qualified social workers. Whilst the service had experienced difficulties, since the introduction of the Workforce Planning Group the service was now almost up to full strength. He advised that as well as staff numbers it was also important to have the right mix of staff and support for staff was vital in order to retain these staff and build a stable workforce which is a key factor valued by families. Members questioned the impact of the introduction of the Single Pay Scale and were informed that it was difficult to comment with any certainty but potentially the impact was more on staff retention than recruitment.

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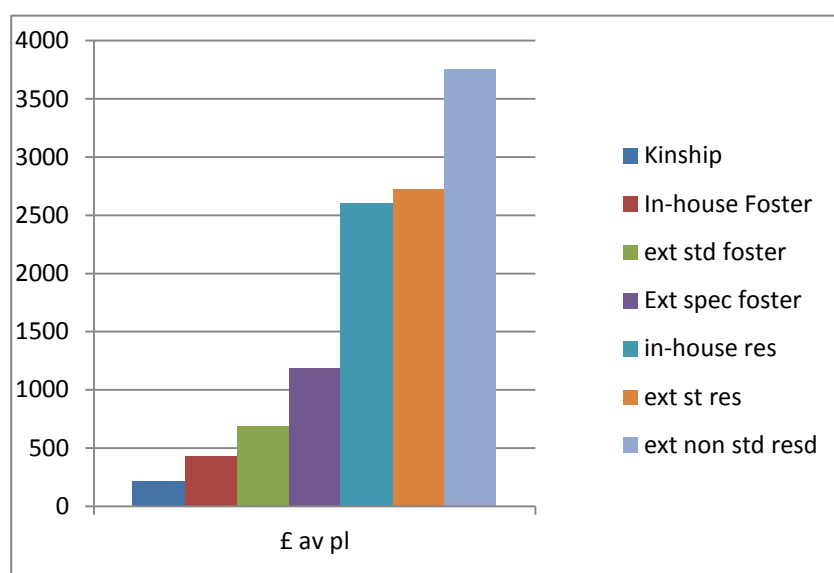
4   **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – COMMISSIONNING MIX**

4.1   When the decision is taken to take a child into care, the service priority is to ensure that the child's placement provides the right environment to support their needs and that a plan is developed to ensure their wellbeing and safety. However, placements also need to be based within the context of making the best and most efficient use of the resources available.

4.2   The Working Group studied a range of all Wales comparative data in relation to Looked After Children numbers and placement types and these are re-produced at Appendix 1.

4.3   The data presented to the Working Group confirmed that Rhondda Cynon Taf has the highest number of Looked After Children (LAC) placements in Wales. In 2013/14 there were 650[3]. However, taking account of population size, ie based on the rate per 10,000, Rhondda Cynon Taf has the fifth highest level of LAC placements, with Neath Port Talbot, Torfaen, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils having higher rates of Looked After Children.

4.4   This data also supports the theory that those areas with the highest level of deprivation tended to have the highest number of LAC placements. However, the Working Group observed that there are some exceptions to this, most notably Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Working Group learnt that they had managed to control their numbers of Looked After Children in part, as a result of a very good Special Guardianship policy which Rhondda Cynon Taf has now utilised. These placements are not 'looked after' placements as guardians have more parental responsibility than foster carers. Often guardians have been relative carers who have chosen to go down the route of guardianship to move away from the intrusions associated with the care system. The level of financial assistance awarded is determined by a means tested assessment.

4.5   The Working Group met with the Head of Financial Reporting for the Community & Children's Services Group who provided Members with a summary of unit costs for Looked After Children placements.

4.6   The Working Group was informed that there is a maximum of 14 in-house residential beds available across the 3 homes operated by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. However, occupancy was currently reduced to a maximum of 12 due to the specific needs of one highly vulnerable young person being accommodated at one of the homes. As a result, the average placement cost at the time was £2604 per week rather than the target figure of between £2300 - £2400 per week. (This figure excludes central establishment charges.) However, it was pointed out that this was still a more cost effective solution in comparison with the costs of a specialist external 'out of county placement'.

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[3] [3] Statswales – First Release, 240914, Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales 2013-14

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4.7   The average cost to the Authority of standard external residential provision is slightly higher than residential in-house costs at £2721 per week. However, the external specialist placements are significantly higher with an average cost of £3755 per week although some placement costs can be as much as £5000 per week.

4.8   The Working Group learnt that the payments made to in-house mainstream foster carers are made up of two elements, ie the fee element which is intended to reward the foster carer for undertaking their role and is based on certain expectations of them; and an allowance which is intended to cover the financial costs of looking after the child. These amounts along with other direct service costs relating to social worker support costs but excluding central establishment charges (CEC's) provide an average cost of £429 per week per placement.

4.9   The average weekly cost of placements made with in-house Kinship (Relative) Carers equates to £217 per week as such placements do not attract a paid fee element.

4.10   The Authority's fee payment structure includes softer benefits such as retainer fee payments and access to free leisure services. Such benefits are in most cases not offered by external fostering agencies.

4.11   The cost of a standard external foster placement is £691per week but for non standard placements this can rise to £1189 per week (these are usually 'solo' placements and therefore compensation is paid).

4.12   The Council also provides financial support to Special Guardians where children are placed under Special Guardianship Orders. The average weekly financial contribution for such placements, excluding any Central Establishment Costs amounts to £97 per week.

4.13   The following table, based on average costs highlights the significant cost of external specialist placements.

Fig 1 Average weekly placement costs

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4.14 The Head of Financial Services explained that the commissioning mix can have a major influence on the Looked After Children budget and just a small number of additional children being placed in specialist external placements can have a significant impact on the budget. Given the large numbers of children needing placements, it is not altogether surprising to see that for 2013/14 Rhondda Cynon Taf was ranked 19th in relation to the mix of foster placements ie the numbers of internal as opposed to external foster placements.

4.15 The table below demonstrates how a change in the mix of placements can affect the budget.

Fig 2 - Analysis of Commissioning Mix (financial)

Type of Placement	No's @ April 14	No's @ Dec 14	Variance No.'s	Ave Cost per Wk	Additional cost per wk
In-house Residential	10	12	2	£	£0
External Residential	40	52	12	£ 2,948	£35,376
Total Residential	50	64	14		£35,376
Mainstream Foster	170	170	0	£ 429	£0
Relative Foster	129	146	17	£ 217	£3,689
External Fostering	209	186	(23)	£ 707	(£16,261)
Total Fostering	508	502	(6)		(£12,572)
Special Guardianship & Residence	117	146	29	£ 97	£2,813
Total	**675**	**712**	**37**		**£25,617**

Potential Additional Annual Commitment   £1,332,084

4.16 Out of county placements also attract additional costs related to travel time and mileage which on average is £100 per visit. There is a requirement for 2 Independent Reviewing Officer visits per annum whilst the number of social work visits will vary depending on the circumstances of the placement.

4.17 The Working Group was informed that that the foster placement commissioning mix had improved since March 2014 with the balance moving from 57% in-house/43% external to approximately 62% in-house/38% external.

4.18 The Service Director, Children's Services informed the Working Group that a great deal of effort is taken to ensure that the Council obtains best value whilst at the same time balancing this with the needs of the child. He also highlighted the importance of the intelligence which was gathered in respect of the quality of the care and services provided.

4.19 On 7th January 2015, the Working Group met with the Regional Commissioning Manager for the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs). This is a partnership of 15 Welsh Local Authorities who work together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people and achieve value for money through working together collaboratively.

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4.20 The Working Group was informed that the Consortium operates two frameworks, one for foster placements and one for residential placements and these Frameworks specify looked after children placement requirements and the outcomes to be achieved for every looked after child and there is a tender process to select the best independent residential and foster placement providers. The Working Group was provided with some key facts and figures:

- £79 million per annum spent on independent sector LAC placements by the Consortium's member authorities
- Non-framework placements are more expensive than Framework
  - Foster placement average difference of £190 per week or £9880 per annum
  - Residential placement average difference of £137 per week or £7124 per annum
- 97% independent foster care placements are with framework providers
- Over 91% of young people who responded to their Outcomes Survey for 2014 felt their outcomes were being met by their placement most or all of the time.
- Higher rates of concerns are reported by local authorities to the 4Cs regional commissioning unit in relation to non-framework providers which can lead to higher costs and higher rates of disruption

4.21 The Regional Commissioning Manager explained that as a group, the local authorities within the Consortium have enormous customer power and this has had a stabilising effect on prices. Analysis of new foster care and residential placements highlighted that the average placement costs for Consortium members was lower than those for non-consortium authorities and that Rhondda Cynon Taf had fared particularly well from the Consortium, paying less for placements than the regional average. She also informed the Group that through the Consortium it was hoped to encourage the right types of provider to develop more local placements across Wales.

4.22 The Working Group was informed that the Consortium has a Board whose membership includes the Heads of Service for each participating council whilst the Consortium's lead director is Mr Giovani Isingrini, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Group Director for Community & Children's Services. There are also director representatives for the SEWIC (South East Wales Improvement Collaborative) and Mid and West Regions. However, the Working Group leant that there is no political representation in terms of governance arrangements although reports were prepared for individual Cabinets and the WLGA. There was also no requirement to produce an annual report as part of any governance arrangements but the Regional Commissioning Manager explained that various reports were provided for different parties which would include the SEWIC Directors' Board and Mid and West Wales Directors' Board. In addition, various forms of funding have their own compliance requirements.

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4.23   The Working Group discussed the process which determined where a child would be placed and the Service Director, Children's Services advised that the regulatory inspections reports of any establishment would always be checked before a child was placed there.   The Regional Commissioning Manager also confirmed that all local authorities now complete a pre-placement checklist before placing any children with non-framework providers.   She also explained that the reason a child was placed in residential rather than foster care centred around whether the child could be safely placed with a family or not.   Often the children exhibited very challenging violent behaviour.   However, the intention was always to work with child to stabilise and help them so that they can make the transition to a family placement.

4.24   The Working Group discussed the need to upskill foster carers to deal with the very challenging children and the Regional Commissioning Manager reported that in Swansea, the local authority and a framework provider have worked closely together to develop a transitional model.   The Working Group also reflected on a previous scheme operated by the Authority whish was the development of 'Remand Foster Carers' who were specially trained to deal with difficult young people who had been remanded into the care of the local authority.   This scheme prevented these young people having to be detained in custody whilst their cases were going through the court system.   This scheme had eventually been withdrawn as over time successful early intervention schemes had led to a drop in demand.

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5.   CHILDREN & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

5.1   There have been various studies over the years which suggest that children in the care system have a higher incidence of mental health problems. These problems may have been caused or exacerbated by poverty, abuse or neglect experienced prior to entering care, or in some cases their behavioural problems may have been the root cause of the family breakdown leading to care.

5.2   Early in the review process, the Working Group decided that there was a need to consider the accessibility of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for those children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Group was concerned that if the physiological needs of these children who were either on the verge of entering the care system or being 'looked after' were not dealt with at an early age, their behavioural problems would only escalate, leading to the more specialist care placements which are so costly. There was concern that the reluctance by the medical profession to 'label' young children with a mental health diagnosis, whilst understandable, could be preventing these children from accessing the services which they needed. Members were also concerned that this situation was placing an unfair burden on the Council's Social Services and Education budgets. This is a concern which also appears to be shared by the CSSIW and the following is an extract from an inspection of Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of a National Inspection of Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours (August 2014):

> *"There was an insufficient suitable supply of appropriate placements within this authority's boundaries to meet the demands of children and young people identified as having emotional or psychological health needs, including those associated with risky behaviours. This led to many looked after children being placed some distance from home thus militating against the maintenance of significant relationships within their home authority. The authority recognised this challenge and was working with other local authorities to develop a commissioning strategy to create placement capacity within the south east Wales region.*
>
> *There was a significant gap in appropriate services to meet the emotional and psychological health and development needs of some children and young people, including those associated with risky behaviours thus creating an over-reliance on social services. Specifically there is a recognised longstanding disconnect between the access threshold applied by CAMHS and the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers. We saw extensive waiting lists for CAMHS with some children and young people not receiving a service to address an assessed therapeutic need at all. The situation was exacerbated for those children and young people placed out of county. "*

5.3   The Working Group was also aware of the inquiry which had been undertaken by the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

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In response to these concerns, Dr Claire Ball, Clinical Director of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service was invited to attend a meeting of the Working Group to discuss the pathways into the service, the provision across the County Borough and the provision for those children place 'out of county'.

5.4   Dr Ball informed the Working Group that the Cwm Taf UHB CAMHS network provides a specialist CAMHS service for 3 health boards, namely, Cwm Taf, ABM (Abertawe Bro Morgannwg) and Cardiff & the Vale. The service provides in-patient (Tier 4) services to the above University Health Boards and also Aneurin Bevan, and Hywel Dda UHBs and lower Powys. The service also provides the 'all Wales' Forensic Adolescent Consultation Team.

5.5   The Service is based on a 4 tier concept and a windscreen model of delivery:
- Tier 1 – frontline delivery;
- Tier 2 – First line of specialist services;
- Tier 3 – Teams of specialist services;
- Tier 4 – very specialist interventions and care.

5.6   Dr Ball reported that the inquiry carried out by the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee had reported an increase in demand for referrals for treatment to CAMHS which could be partly attributed to changes made to their operating framework by the Welsh Government in April 2012 which extended the service provision to children and adolescents up to their 18th birthday rather than 16th birthday but with limited additional funding.

5.7   She reported that as a result of the Inquiry's findings, the Health Minister had appointed an external advisor, Dame Sue Bailey to undertake a review of CAMHS and he had also launched 'Together for Children and Young People - Improving Mental Health & Wellbeing' on 26th February 2015 with a promised follow up in June 2015.

5.8   Dr Ball provided an overview of the national picture for CAMHS and explained that the aim is that Clinical NHS specialist CAMHS provision is similar across Wales in relation to its core features and the view of the Clinical Leaders Group is that the services should:
- Assess & treat Children & Young People with moderate to severe mental disorder and illness using CAPA (Choice & Partnership approach)
- Support & work with partners to develop services that meet the needs of Children &Young People with Neurodevelopmental Disorders
- Support & work with partners to promote wellbeing and to jointly develop services that meet the needs of children presenting with high levels of risky behaviour, possibly as a consequence of early experience and life trauma.

5.9   Dr Ball provided the Working Group with benchmarking figures for staffing levels which identified that Cwm Taf's CAMHS service is functioning at 16% of the Royal College Psychiatrists guidance for staffing levels and at 23% when

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comparing with NHS Benchmarking data (May 2012) based on 51 CAMHS services in England.

5.10 Dr Ball also provided an overview of the work being undertaken between CAMHS and partner agencies, such as:

- The development of a Children & Young People subgroup of T4MH to develop and jointly plan services. However, this is not up and running yet In CwmTaf;
- Community Paediatrics;
- Progress being made with GPs in relation to shared care agreement for medical treatment of ADHD;
- Education Services – predominantly with the Education Psychology services developing shared pathways for ASD (there were currently no pathways for ADHD) and holding regular liaison meetings;
- Social Services – A consultation service has recently been established for Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- Youth Offending Service – Access to a mental health advisor through Tier 3 Forensic CAMHS.
- 3rd Sector – relationships through the Primary Mental Health Service.

5.11 The Working Group questioned Dr Ball in relation to the pathways into the CAMHS Service and whether there was a need for a broader view to be taken.

5.12 Dr Ball reported that the referral criteria had been in place for a considerable time and whilst not necessarily fit for purpose explained that there is no current mechanism to change. She explained that the service could not operate a broader referral category without additional resources and that they had to concentrate their resources on those cases where only they could deliver the service.

5.13 Members questioned the interface with those young people and children in residential or foster care.

5.14 Dr Ball explained that the consultation model with Social Services was being established partly to deal with this issue but also pointed out that this model was for those with a high level of need rather than those on the threshold. However, the development of the model could still lead to referrals to other services or at the very least provide a better understanding for social workers. She explained that it was important to utilise the clinical skills to maximum use and enable those young people whose highlighted needs meet the threshold to access the services.

5.15 Members were informed that the regional in-patient adolescent facility is now based in Ty Llidiard, at the Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend, which is a purpose built Tier 4 facility operating 24/7. With regard to the privately run facility at Ebbw Vale Dr Ball reported that the unit had recently been successful in the commissioning process and as of 1st April 0215 had been part of the commissioning framework providing a low secure provision. The

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unit also has approval for an open ward and should Ty Llidiard be fully occupied it could be considered as an option.

5.16   The Working Group referred to the increase in referrals to the service and whilst appreciating that part of this was attributable to the increase in age range, asked Dr Ball whether any work had been carried out to understand the reasons behind the increase.

5.17   Dr Ball reported that the statistics had come from a national document and she was not aware of any further scrutiny of the figures by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. She suggested that contributing to the increase was a rise in the number of children and young people with neurodevelopmental conditions and an increase in diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Previously children would only be diagnosed with Autism which on average affected 1 in every 1000 children.   However, more awareness had led to an increasing diagnosis of children on the spectrum which affects 1 in 100.

5.18   Reference was made to the budget figures provided to the Children, Young People and Education Committee which highlighted that the Cwm Taf CAMHS Directorate (CTUHB, C&VUHB, ABMUHB) had approximately only 50% of the national benchmarked average budget.   Dr Ball informed the Group that representation had been made to the Health Board, outlining the risks of this to children and young people and also pointed out that these figures were now out of date and had improved slightly. Dr Ball also reported that work is being undertaken toward developing a service model for those with neurodevelopmental disorders subject to funding becoming available. However, she believed that resources would still be inadequate and that there needed to be more creativity in the design of the services for the future. She felt that there was a need to map the current requirements, not just of those in the Looked After System but at an earlier stage and consideration needed to be given as to how placements can be supported not necessarily by providing treatment but perhaps in a different way.

5.19   The Working Group referred to the introduction of the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.

5.20   Dr Ball explained that the Mental Health (Wales) Measure was intended to be ageless. However, whilst it had been well thought though in terms of bridging the service gaps for adults, the needs of children and young people had not been considered at an early enough stage and had perhaps suffered as a result.   She informed Members that within the Measure there is a 'Duty to Review' and that an interim report had been published in January 2015.

5.21   The Working Group referred to the concerns highlighted by the Children & Young People and Education Committee in relation to the use of prescription medicines to manage young people's conditions.

5.22   Dr Ball informed the Working Group that there are clear NICE guidelines for the management of depression in under 18s and the use of medicine can play

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a part in this. However, she explained that it is more usual to start with off with psychological treatments and rarely would antidepressants be used straight off. She added that in England access to psychological treatment for all age groups had benefited from financial investment. However, this funding did not translate to Wales. A small amount of one-off funding had been made available last summer and through pooling resources this had enabled staff to undertake training in a more robust way in respect of the more delicate treatments such as cognitive behaviour therapy and family systemic work. However, the service shared the concerns of Members with regard to the waiting times for treatment.

5.23 The Working Group conveyed their concerns, namely, funding for secondary and tertiary services and also concerns in relation to the primary services and early recognition and intervention and asked in what way could the working group could support the CAMHS service.

5.24 Dr Ball explained that key to developing the primary services would be the overall planning and mapping of what services currently exist and thinking through how the gaps in provision can be addressed. She reported that whilst previously the service had 4 primary mental health workers, these posts had disappeared as a result of changes to funding streams.

5.25 The Working Group expressed their concern in relation the difficulty facing the authority in ensuring that those children placed out of county are able to access the mental health services they require and Dr Ball agreed that this would be challenging given that England operated very differently to Wales.

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6.   CONCLUSIONS

6.1   Whilst demographic and socio economic conditions can influence the numbers of Looked After Children, there are measures which can be undertaken by local authorities to support a reduction. Caerphilly County Borough Council has had some success in this through a focus on Special Guardianship Orders and this approach has now been adopted by Rhondda Cynon Taf.

6.2   Rhondda Cynon Taf has the largest number of Looked After Children in Wales. However, during the course of this review there have been some signs that the early intervention and prevention measures put in place are beginning to have a positive effect and at 31st March 2015, the figure had dropped to 621. The Working Group would suggest that there needs to be a focus on further safely reducing this number during 2015/16 and to achieve this there must be clear ambitious target setting, improved co-ordination of services and improved support for the wider family - the 3 main reasons for child protection registration being domestic violence, substance misuse and the mental health of parents.

6.3   However, the Working Group is also aware of the potential risks and challenges which could be thrown up by the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the introduction of a National Adoption Agency. Rhondda Cynon Taf's own Adoption Service has been particularly successful in recent years and the operation of the new national service through a regional collaborative model will need to be closely monitored to ensure that adoption numbers do not reduce. Perhaps a greater challenge will be the introduction of 'When I Am Ready', a Welsh Government initiative to support the transition of young people in care into adulthood and which will allow young people to remain with their foster carers beyond 18 (until they are 21 or if undertaking an agreed programme of education or training until they are 25). Whilst no one can dispute the merits of this scheme, it will impact on the availability of foster care placements.

6.4   Although the number of children placed in specialist 'out of county' placements is a small percentage of the total, these placements can have the biggest impact on the Looked After Children budget. Whilst there is a need to safely reduce the overall LAC population, it is these expensive 'out of county' placements which need to be reduced in order to control the Looked After Children budget. The Working Group would suggest that there needs to be an emphasis on finding ways of better supporting foster carers and providing them with the necessary skills to cope with the children with the most challenging behaviour. The Council is currently outsourcing its recruitment of foster carers to a specialist company and there may be opportunity to widen their brief to include recruitment of those with the potential to become specialist foster carers. Consideration should also be given to harnessing the skills of the residential care workers in supporting moves from residential to foster care.

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6.5   The Children's Commissioning Consortium has had a stabilising effect on the market and reduced the average cost of placements and the Working Group welcomes the aim to develop more local placements across Wales. However, there does seem to be a lack of political oversight in relation to the operation of the Consortium and this needs to be addressed.

6.6   The Working Group is concerned that those children not diagnosed with mental illness but requiring therapeutic treatment are not able to access primary level services and this can be a contributing factor in family breakdowns. However, it is evident that the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service has been underfunded and at a time of competing demands there is a need for the Council to act as a voice for the children and young people and to remind the Health Board of the challenges facing the service and of the importance of appropriate and timely primary mental health services for children and young people across the county borough. It will also be important for all agencies to work together in developing the Community Intensive Therapy Team.

6.7   Since meeting with Dr Ball, the Welsh Government has announced an additional £7.6m funding every year in mental health services for children and young people in Wales. The funding package includes £2m to develop services for young people with neuro-developmental needs, including ADHD and autistic spectrum disorders. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee may wish to monitor the impact of this funding boost at some point.

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APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1 : Total Looked After Children - Annual Comparison (source SSDA903 return)

Local Authority	No. at Mar 2010	No. at Mar 2011	No. at Mar 2012	No. at Mar 2013	No. at Mar 2014	Increase / (Decrease)	%age Increase / (Decrease)	Ranking		population (0-17)	Total LAC per 10,000 Population	Population Ranking		Increase / Decrease 2010 - 2014	%age Increase / (Decrease)
Pembrokeshire	145	155	150	145	125	-20	-13.80%	1		24,883	50.24	1		-20	-14%
Caerphilly	335	300	310	305	275	-30	-9.80%	2		38,984	70.54	9		-60	-18%
Gwynedd	175	175	195	205	185	-20	-9.80%	3		23,595	78.41	12		10	6%
Carmarthenshire	245	260	270	270	245	-25	-9.30%	4		37,368	65.56	6		0	0%
Swansea	560	580	555	590	540	-50	-8.50%	5		47,008	114.87	17		-20	-4%
Isle of Anglesey	75	80	90	80	75	-5	-6.30%	6		13,628	55.03	2		0	0%
Neath Port Talbot	390	415	470	490	470	-20	-4.10%	7		27,835	168.85	22		80	21%
Merthyr Tydfil	165	165	195	180	175	-5	-2.80%	8		12,508	139.91	19		10	6%
Torfaen	235	290	300	300	295	-5	-1.70%	9		19,427	151.85	21		60	26%
Powys	145	170	170	150	150	0	0.00%	10		25,469	58.9	4		5	3%
Conwy	170	165	180	165	165	0	0.00%	11		21,787	75.73	11		-5	-3%
Ceredigion	75	80	80	75	75	0	0.00%	12		12,548	59.77	5		0	0%
Newport	295	285	275	280	285	5	1.80%	13		33,220	85.79	15		-10	-3%
Vale of Glamorgan	185	205	215	180	185	5	2.80%	14		27,046	68.4	8		0	0%
Denbighshire	165	175	160	160	165	5	3.10%	15		19,366	85.2	14		0	0%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	480	550	595	620	650	30	4.80%	16		50,037	129.9	18		170	35%
Bridgend	290	325	345	385	410	25	6.50%	17		29,030	141.23	20		120	41%
Blaenau Gwent	120	130	135	135	145	10	7.40%	18		14,073	103.03	16		25	21%
Cardiff	530	520	570	555	610	55	9.90%	19		72,441	84.21	13		80	15%
Flintshire	160	160	175	195	215	20	10.30%	20		32,224	66.72	7		55	34%
Wrexham	145	160	175	195	215	20	10.30%	21		29,379	73.18	10		70	48%
Monmouthshire	85	80	105	75	105	30	40.00%	22		18,355	57.21	3		20	24%
Grand Total	**5170**	**5425**	**5715**	**5735**	**5760**	**25**	**0.40%**			**630,211**	**86.08**			**590**	**11%**

KEY:

Comparator Authorities
RCT

TABLE 2 : Total Fostering Placements - Annual Comparison (source SSDA903 return)

Local Authority	No. at Mar 2010	No. at Mar 2011	No. at Mar 2012	No. at Mar 2013	No. at Mar 2014	Increase / (Decrease)	%age Increase / (Decrease)	Ranking		%age Fostering places to LAC (Mar 13)	%age Fostering Ranking	population (0-17)	Total Fostering per 10,000 Population	Population Ranking		Increase / Decrease 2010 - 2014	%age Increase / (Decrease)
Swansea	425	455	395	425	380	-45	-10.60%	1		70.40%	19	47,008	80.84	16		-45	-11%
Gwynedd	135	135	155	170	140	-30	-17.60%	2		75.70%	14	23,595	59.33	12		5	4%
Caerphilly	275	255	270	255	230	-25	-9.80%	3		83.60%	3	38,984	59	11		-45	-16%
Pembrokeshire	120	125	120	120	95	-25	-20.80%	4		76.00%	13	24,883	38.18	1		-25	-21%
Torfaen	190	235	245	240	230	-10	-4.20%	5		78.00%	10	19,427	118.39	20		40	21%
Powys	125	145	145	130	125	-5	-3.80%	6		83.30%	4	25,469	49.08	8		0	0%
Neath Port Talbot	325	350	385	380	375	-5	-1.30%	7		79.80%	7	27,835	134.72	22		50	15%
Newport	235	220	225	225	220	-5	-2.20%	8		77.20%	11	33,220	66.23	15		-15	-6%
Merthyr Tydfil	135	140	155	155	150	-5	-3.20%	9		85.70%	1	12,508	119.92	21		15	11%
Vale of Glamorgan	150	170	165	130	130	0	0.00%	10		70.30%	20	27,046	48.07	7		-20	-13%
Ceredigion	65	75	70	60	60	0	0.00%	11		80.00%	6	12,548	47.82	6		-5	-8%
Isle of Anglesey	45	45	55	55	55	0	0.00%	12		73.30%	15	13,628	40.36	2		10	22%
Denbighshire	100	110	115	120	120	0	0.00%	13		72.70%	16	19,366	61.96	14		20	20%
Wrexham	95	115	110	135	135	0	0.00%	14		62.80%	22	29,379	45.95	5		40	42%
Carmarthenshire	200	215	230	205	210	5	2.40%	15		85.70%	2	37,368	56.2	10		10	5%
Conwy	130	130	130	115	120	5	4.30%	16		72.70%	17	21,787	55.08	9		-10	-8%
Blaenau Gwent	95	110	105	110	115	5	4.50%	17		79.30%	8	14,073	81.72	17		20	21%
Flintshire	120	115	120	135	145	10	7.40%	18		67.40%	21	32,224	45	4		25	21%
Monmouthshire	70	70	90	65	80	15	23.10%	19		76.20%	12	18,355	43.58	3		10	14%
Bridgend	225	260	260	310	335	25	8.10%	20		81.70%	5	29,030	115.4	19		110	49%
Cardiff	410	405	430	410	440	30	7.30%	21		72.10%	18	72,441	60.74	13		30	7%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	365	440	455	485	515	30	6.20%	22		79.20%	9	50,037	102.92	18		150	41%
Grand Total	**4035**	**4320**	**4430**	**4435**	**4405**	**-30**	**-0.70%**			**81%**		**630,211**	**69.9**			**370**	**9%**

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Comparator Authorities
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TABLE 3 : Total Fostering Placements - Analysis of Commissioning Mix (source SSDA903)

Local Authority	In-house Foster Places	Relative Foster Places	In-house Foster Places (Incl. Relatives)	External Foster Places	Total	% age Fostering 'Commissioning Mix' (In-house / External)	Ranking
Carmarthenshire	155	45	200	0	200	100 / 0	1
Denbighshire	65	40	105	10	115	91 / 9	2
Conwy	80	20	100	10	110	91 / 9	3
Pembrokeshire	70	10	80	10	90	89 / 11	4
Gwynedd	75	30	105	35	140	75 / 25	5
Torfaen	115	55	170	60	230	74 / 26	6
Ceredigion	30	10	40	15	55	73 / 27	7
Powys	75	15	90	35	125	72 / 28	8
Flintshire	75	30	105	45	150	70 / 30	9
Newport	135	15	150	70	220	68 / 32	10
Monmouthshire	30	20	50	25	75	67 / 33	11
Wrexham	60	25	85	45	130	65 / 35	12
Vale of Glamorgan	55	30	85	45	130	65 / 35	13
Blaenau Gwent	70	5	75	40	115	65 / 35	14
Neath Port Talbot	160	80	240	130	370	65 / 35	15
Caerphilly	105	35	140	85	225	62 / 38	16
Bridgend	145	65	210	130	340	62 / 38	17
Swansea	125	100	225	160	385	58 / 42	18
Rhondda Cynon Taf	160	130	290	220	510	57 / 43	19
Isle of Anglesey	20	5	25	25	50	50 / 50	20
Merthyr Tydfil	25	35	60	90	150	40 / 60	21
Cardiff	95	45	140	300	440	32 / 68	22
Grand Total	**1925**	**845**	**2770**	**1585**	**4355**	**68 / 32**	

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Comparator Authorities
RCT

TABLE 4 : Summary of External Residential Places made by SEWIC LA's between June 2013 and June 2014

Local Authority	30th Jun 2013	30th Sep 2013	31st Dec 2013	31st Mar 2014	30th Jun 2014	%age increase / decrease	%age increase Ranking	Qtrly Progress	population (0-17)	Places per 10,000 Pop'n	Pop'n Ranking
Torfaen	4	3	4	4	2	-67%	1	?	19,605	1.02	1
Merthyr Tydfil	6	6	4	4	3	-50%	2	?	12,459	2.408	6
Ceredigion	7	6	6	4	4	-43%	3	?	12,638	3.165	8
Bridgend	16	16	15	14	12	-31%	4	?	28,906	4.151	9
Swansea	53	49	49	45	41	-21%	5	?	46,740	8.772	14
Neath Port Talbot	19	19	19	17	15	-20%	6	?	28,076	5.343	11
The Vale of Glamorgan	23	28	27	21	20	-15%	7	?	27,109	7.378	13
Cardiff	50	50	50	51	51	2%	8	??	71,669	7.116	12
Rhondda Cynon Taf	43	40	36	41	45	5%	9	?	50,033	8.994	15
Caerphilly	5	7	6	7	7	29%	10	?	39,261	1.783	4
Blaenau Gwent	2	3	1	2	3	33%	12	?	14,162	2.118	5
Newport	7	9	11	11	10	33%	11	?	33,187	3.013	7
Powys	3	6	3	5	4	33%	13	?	25,778	1.552	3
Monmouthshire	7	7	7	7	9	50%	14	?	18,515	4.861	10
Carmarthenshire	2	2	2	3	4	100%	15	?	37,538	1.066	2
Grand Total	**247**	**251**	**240**	**236**	**230**				**465,676**	**4.939**	

TABLE 5 : Summary of Average Cost of Residential Placements (All) per SEWIC LA's at 30th June 14

Placement Type	Residential Care - (All)
Period Ending	30th June 14

Local Authority	Total Weekly Cost of Places (£)	Total No. of Places	Average Cost Per Week (£)	Ranking	Progress
Powys	10,221	4	2,555	1	▲
The Vale of Glamorgan	58,892	20	2,945	2	◄►
Caerphilly	20,680	7	2,954	3	▲
Blaenau Gwent	9,252	3	3,084	4	▲
Swansea	129,271	41	3,153	5	▲
Carmarthenshire	12,824	4	3,206	6	▲
Rhondda Cynon Taf	147,352	45	3,274	7	▼
Monmouthshire	30,331	9	3,370	8	▼
Torfaen	6,779	2	3,389	9	▼
Cardiff	178,143	51	3,493	10	▼
Neath Port Talbot	54,120	15	3,608	11	▼
Merthyr Tydfil	11,433	3	3,811	12	◄►
Bridgend	46,979	12	3,915	13	▼
Ceredigion	16,020	4	4,005	14	◄►
Newport	41,704	10	4,170	15	◄►
Grand Total	**774,000**	**230**	**3,365**		

Note: Ave cost per week at end of December 2013 for RCT was £3249

TABLE 6 : Summary of Average Cost of Standard Residential Placements per SEWIC LA's at 30th June 14

Placement Type	Residential Care - Standard
Period Ending	30th June 14

Local Authority	Total Weekly Cost	Total No. of Places	Average Cost Per Week (£)	Ranking	Progress
Powys	7,995	3	2,665	1	▲
Rhondda Cynon Taf	60,416	22	2,746	2	▼
Swansea	77,595	27	2,874	3	◄►
The Vale of Glamorgan	42,045	14	3,003	4	▼
Monmouthshire	6,595	2	3,298	5	▼
Bridgend	3,420	1	3,420	6	◄►
Cardiff	65,899	19	3,468	7	▼
Grand Total	263,965	88	3,000		

Note: Ave cost per week at end of December 2013 for RCT was £2,686

* No Standard placements this QTR: Torfaen, Caerphilly, Camarthen, Neath Port Talbot

TABLE 7 : Summary of Average Cost of Non Standard Residential Placements per SEWIC LA's at 30th June 14

Placement Type	Residential Care - Non Standard
Period Ending	30th June 14

Local Authority	Total Weekly Cost	Total No. of Places	Average Cost Per Week (£)	Ranking	Progress
Powys	2,226	1	2,226	1	◄►
The Vale of Glamorgan	16,847	6	2,808	2	▲
Caerphilly	20,680	7	2,954	3	▲
Blaenau Gwent	9,252	3	3,084	4	▲
Carmarthenshire	12,824	4	3,206	5	▲
Torfaen	6,779	2	3,389	6	▼
Monmouthshire	23,736	7	3,391	7	▼
Cardiff	112,244	32	3,508	8	◄►
Neath Port Talbot	54,120	15	3,608	9	▼
Swansea	51,676	14	3,691	10	◄►
Rhondda Cynon Taf	86,935	23	3,780	11	▼
Merthyr Tydfil	11,433	3	3,811	12	◄►
Bridgend	43,559	11	3,960	13	▼
Ceredigion	16,020	4	4,005	14	◄►
Newport	41,704	10	4,170	15	◄►
Grand Total	**510,035**	**142**	**3,592**		

Note: Ave cost per week at end of December 2013 for RCT was £3689