

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018/19

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

5th December 2018

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Agenda Item No:

**The Placements of RCT Children
Looked After**

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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide scrutiny with information and details of the placements used for those children from RCT that are Looked After.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that scrutiny note the content of the report and the actions being taken to address areas of further improvement.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The reasons for the recommendations are so that scrutiny can:

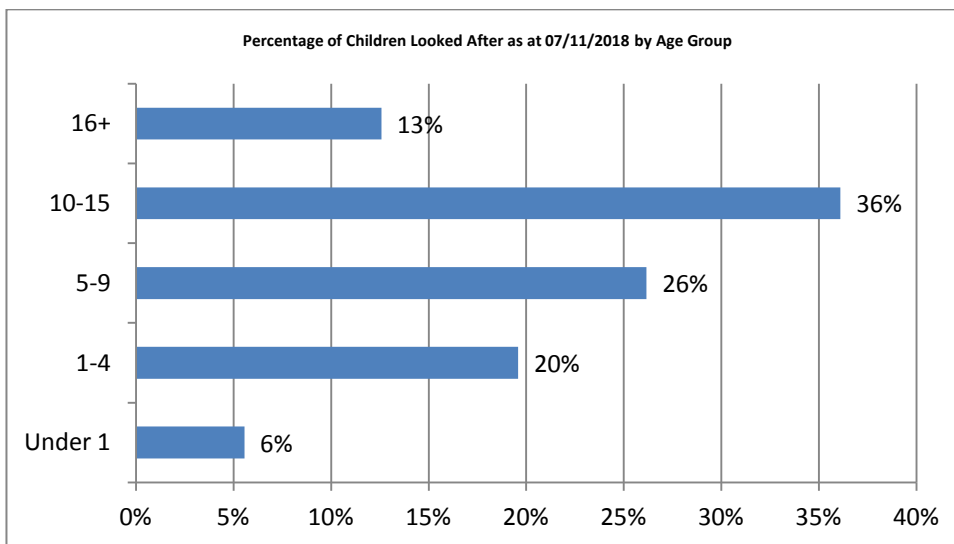
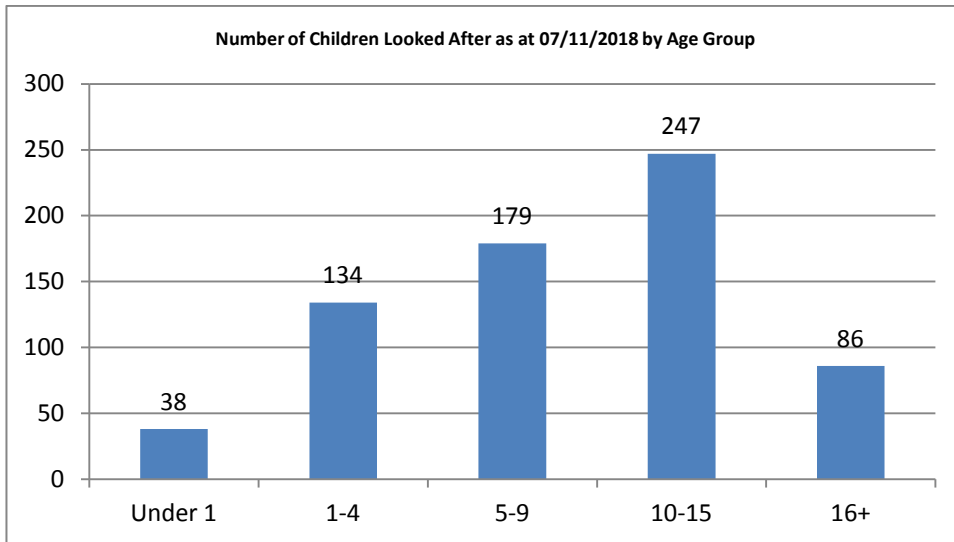
- Note the information contained within this report.
- Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Children and young people looked after by the local authority, rather than their parents, are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our society. As corporate parents, it is our responsibility to keep them safe, make sure their experiences in care are positive and improve their ongoing life chances. We must approach this parenting role with as much commitment as any family and ensure that our children looked after have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
- 4.2 Children looked after by RCT require a range of placement accommodation options including being placed with family members, internal fostering and residential care and external provision through the use of independent fostering agencies and residential providers.
- 4.3 When considering which placement is in the child's best interest regard must be given to the requirements of the Social Services Wellbeing Wales Act (2014). The requirements form the Act have been the basis of the development of the principles within the Cwm Taf and Wellbeing Partnership Board: A Shared Regional Strategy for Supporting Children, Young People and Families. The principles are:
- Where it is safe to do so support will be provided to children and young people to remain with their birth families or extended family and avoid the need for them to be looked after.
 - If a child requires alternative care outside their family or extended family suitable alternative family based foster placements will be firstly considered.
 - Priority will be given to keeping children and young people who are part of a sibling group together.
 - Placements need to be sufficiently local to enable looked after children to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.
 - Out of county foster or residential placement will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and once satisfied that there is no local alternative.
 - Permanence planning should commence at the initial contact with families to ensure we minimise the amount of time children spend in the care system.
 - Permanence planning must include all organisations and professionals who are involved with the child and families to ensure that their needs are fully met.

5. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER DATA:

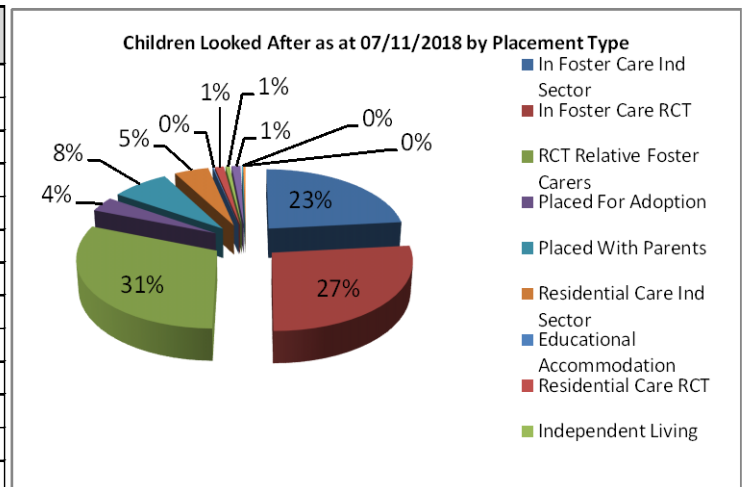
5.1 There were **684** children looked after on the 07/11/2018. The age groups of the children are as follows:



172 (26%) were aged 4 and under. This is a drop for this age group when compared to the 186 (27%) reported as at 31/03/18 and 208 (30%) reported as at 31/03/2017.

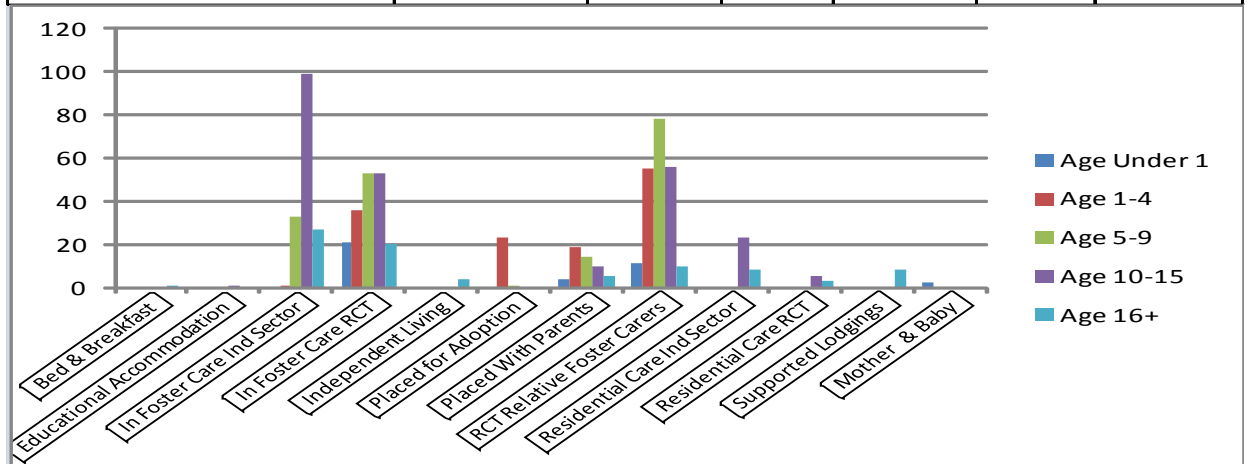
PLACEMENT TYPES:

Placement Type	Number Placed	Percentage Placed
In Foster Care Ind Sector	160	23%
In Foster Care RCT	183	27%
RCT Relative Foster Carers	210	31%
Placed For Adoption	24	4%
Placed With Parents	52	8%
Residential Care Ind Sector	31	5%
Educational Accommodation	1	0%
Residential Care RCT	8	1%
Independent Living	4	1%
Supported Lodgings	8	1%
Bed & Breakfast	1	0%
Mother & Baby	2	0%
Total	684	100%



CLA by Placement Type & Age Group

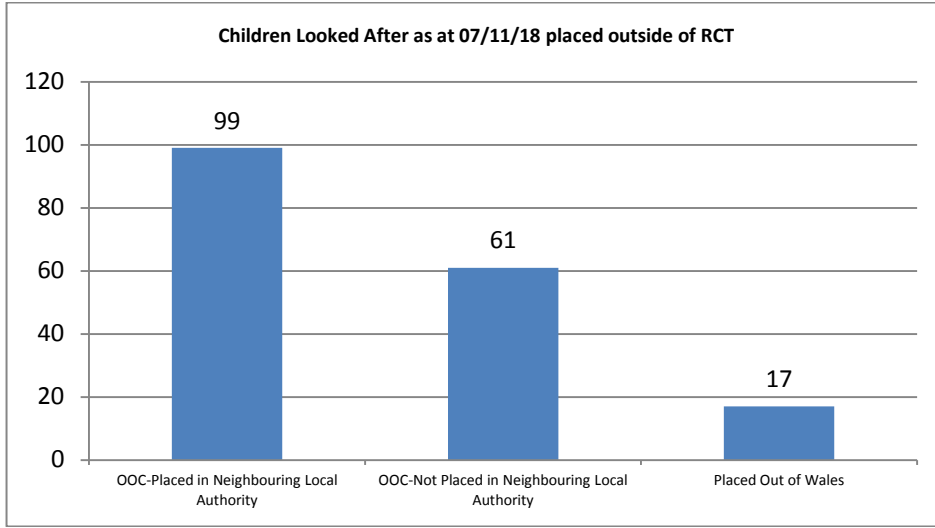
Placement Type	Age Under 1	Age 1-4	Age 5-9	Age 10-15	Age 16+	Total
Bed & Breakfast	0	0	0	0	1	1
Educational Accommodation	0	0	0	1	0	1
In Foster Care Ind Sector	0	1	33	99	27	160
In Foster Care RCT	21	36	53	53	20	183
Independent Living	0	0	0	0	4	4
Placed for Adoption	0	23	1	0	0	24
Placed With Parents	4	19	14	10	5	52
RCT Relative Foster Carers	11	55	78	56	10	210
Residential Care Ind Sector	0	0	0	23	8	31
Residential Care RCT	0	0	0	5	3	8
Supported Lodgings	0	0	0	0	8	8
Mother & Baby	2	0	0	0	0	2
Grand Total	38	134	179	247	86	684



The majority of children looked after are placed with RCT foster carers and with Relative carers.

CHILDREN PLACED OUT OF COUNTY:

177 children looked after on the 07/11/2018 were placed outside of RCT



Location	Number
OOC-Placed in Neighbouring Local Authority	99
OOC-Not Placed in Neighbouring Local Authority	61
Placed Out of Wales	17
Total	177

Of the 17 children/young people placed out of Wales:

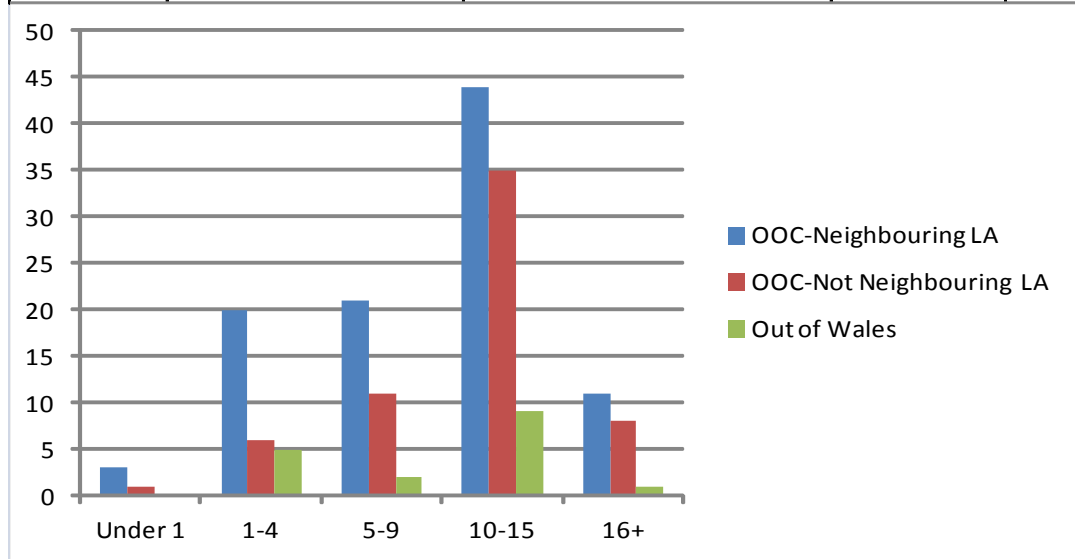
- 9 are placed with relatives.
- 3 are placed for adoption.
- 1 is with independent sector foster carers.
- 4 are placed in residential homes.

The 17 children/young people are placed in the following areas:

Area Placed	Number
Yorkshire	5
Stafford	2
Farnborough	2
West Midlands	2
London	1
Hampshire	1
Bristol	1
Ross-on-Wye	1
Shropshire	1
Stoke-on-Trent	1
Total	17

The ages of those placed out of county are:

Age Group	OOC-Neighbouring LA	OOC-Not Neighbouring LA	Out of Wales	Total
Under 1	3	1	0	4
1-4	20	6	5	31
5-9	21	11	2	34
10-15	44	35	9	88
16+	11	8	1	20
Total	99	61	17	177

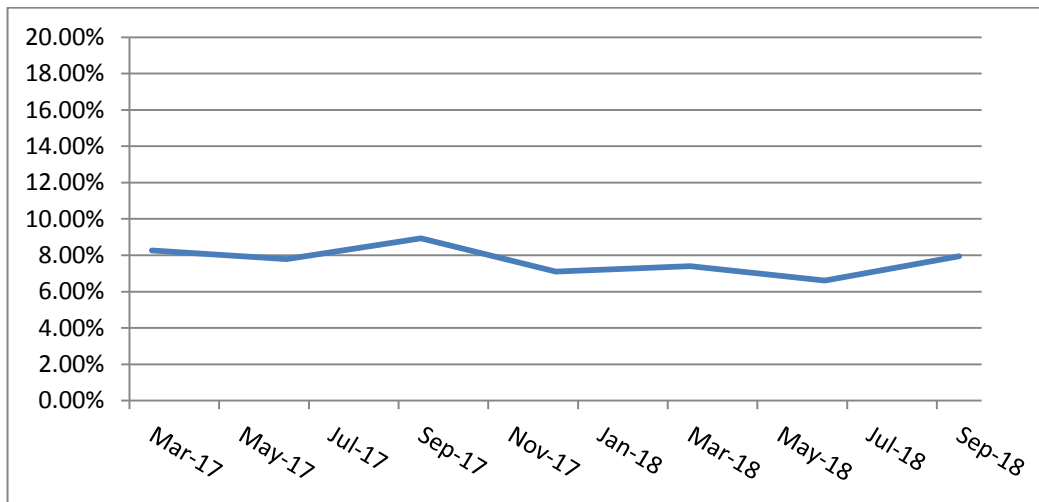


The 35 children aged 4 and under placed out of County are either placed with relative foster carers, placed with their parents or have been placed for adoption.

3+ Placements

The following graph shows the % of children looked after who had experienced 3+ placements during the year

Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18
8.26%	7.78%	8.94%	7.10%	7.40%	6.61%	7.94%



Performance in relation to placement stability has remained fairly steady and it consistently exceeds the All Wales average of 9.8% for this performance indicator.

6. FOSTER CARER NUMBERS:

6.1 The recruitment and retention of in house Foster Carers remains a challenge and during the year from November 2017 to October 2018:

10 additional foster carer households were recruited and approved during the year offering **14** new placements.

19 were however deregistered. The reason for deregistration were mainly due to retirement or leaving fostering because of illness or other commitments. One was deregistered due to competency issues.

24 new kinship carer households were approved during the year, offering **33** new placements

Numbers of approved carers as at 31/03/2018-**244**, this was an Increase from **236** as at 31/03/2017

7. COMMISSIONING PLACEMENTS:

- 7.1 When a child or young person is likely to become looked after their placement needs are considered by RCT Placement Panel which is held on a weekly basis. The panel is attended by Heads of Service and Service Managers and the panel has to agree that a placement is to be made. The Placement Panel also monitors the accommodation needs and placements of children with external providers.
- 7.2 The process for identifying placements for children and young people involves the RCT placement officers firstly reviewing internal resources to establish what is available. Where a suitable match is not identified internally the children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR), an online secure portal developed and supported by Welsh Government, is used to search external placements.
- 7.3 The majority of external placements are commissioned through the "All Wales Framework for the Provision of Foster Care and Residential Care for Children and Young People". This is managed through the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4c's) which supports RCT and a number of other Local Authorities. There are 21 fostering providers and 21 residential providers on the framework. The Consortium is also responsible for the regular review of providers through the annual QPA process as well as quarterly complaints reporting. This is undertaken by ranking those on the framework by tiers 1, 2 and 3 dependent on quality and commercial performance. Those providers on tier 1 provide the highest score on quality and commercial performance. Quality continues to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure consistency of performance.
- 7.4 Issues, concerns and compliments concerning any of the framework or non framework providers are recorded by RCT and the other Local Authorities and reported to 4c's who then produce a monthly and quarterly report. The report highlights concerns in terms of quality of service and safeguarding as well as any compliments made. This enables authorities to explore trends and themes in quality across providers and local authorities and to use this information when making decisions about where children and young people should be placed. During Qtr 1 2018/19 4c's reported 3 complaints from local authorities about residential providers. 2 related to quality of service, 1 related to safeguarding concerns. There were no concerns reported for fostering providers. 4c's also review all inspection reports and provide a summary of issues to RCT officers. During 2017/18 the trend was that more issues are raised about Non-Framework residential providers. This trend appears to be continuing into 2018/19. 4c's are able to consider removal of a provider from the Framework in circumstances where there is no evidence of improvement following monitoring.

7.5 Non framework fostering and residential providers are used but only where no framework placements are available and these are commissioned on an individual basis.. Where there is a need to use a non framework provider the Senior Placement Officer utilises the 4c's contract and service specification to quality assure the provision. They also review the latest CIW/OFSTED inspection report to evidence care standards, visit the establishment and then share with the appropriate Service Managers to aide decision making about the use of a non-framework placement.

Once the child or young person is placed with a non framework provider a calendar of visits is planned to the establishment where the child is placed (in addition to the Childs Children Looked after Review Process) by the Senior Practitioner Placements. This involves a combination of announced and unannounced visits and where necessary involving RCT Residential Services Manager and Contract Monitoring Officer. Reports on visits are provided to the Head of Services and presented at Placement Panel so that any issues highlighted can be dealt with immediately.

7.6 Since 1st April 2018 there have been **9** non-framework placements made with independent fostering agencies and **17** non-framework residential placements. There are currently **48** non-framework providers who are either currently operating in or looking to develop provision within Wales.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This is an information report therefore no Equality and Diversity Assessment is required.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 This is an information report therefore no consultation is required.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 As of the 17th November 2018 RCT are paying £435,512 per week on placements for Children Looked After. This includes both the cost of internal and external placements. The amount can vary week by week depending on the numbers of children looked after and the type of placement they require. The average cost of a external residential placement is £3,675 with the average cost of a external fostering placement costing £727.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

11.1 The legal requirements for children looked after are set down within Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act (2014)

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP

12.1 The appropriate placement of children looked after will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of 'a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all'; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of 'People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and 'Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work'.

12.2 It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

1. A more equal Wales
2. A healthier Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 The reasons why children become looked after are complex and when they enter the care system they often have a wide range of problems including complex and cumulative vulnerabilities. To ensure we are able to meet the needs of these children and young people we need a variety of placements that can address these needs and achieve the best possible outcomes for the individual child or young person. Sometimes this means that children and young people are placed away from their communities and cultures.

13.2 Wherever children and young people are placed they are still the responsibility of RCT and therefore finding the right placement is crucial in fulfilling the duty we have to the children and young people we accommodate. The increasing numbers of children and young people becoming looked after in Wales has put pressure on placement capacity and in turn has resulted in the cost of some placements also increasing