



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2020

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

Agenda Item No:7

**Progress Update:
Implementation of the
Accommodation and Support
Strategy for Young People 16+
years of age Leaving Care
2019-2022.**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 In January 2019 the Accommodation and Support Strategy for Young People 16+ Years of Age Leaving Care 2019-2022 was presented to Members for scrutiny. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress achieved in taking forward the key priorities outlined in the Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

3. BACKGROUND

During 2018 RCT Children Services worked with partners and young people to develop a strategy that outlined the way Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC would in future support young people 16+ years of age leaving care to achieve their best possible outcomes.

The Strategy uses the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework developed by Barnardo's and referenced in the Children's Commissioner's Hidden Ambitions Report 2017/2018 to structure the development of a continuum of accommodation and support for care leavers.

3.1 The key objectives identified in the Strategy were as follows:

- To ensure that children who cannot live with their parents live in suitable accommodation in RCT.
- To develop a clear accommodation pathway for care leavers in RCT.
- To develop a continuum of accommodation and support to meet the needs of care leavers in RCT.
- To reduce the number of care leavers who are placed in B&B accommodation.
- Develop a comprehensive support package for care leavers: Including production of a handbook, development of independent living skills, tenancy readiness.

3.2 The key actions identified to be taken forward in the Strategy are noted below:

Key Actions	
Continuum of Support	
Stage 1	Helping young people to gain skills in preparation for independence and building resilience.
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop independence training for foster carers and residential staff. Utilise knowledge and experience held in the Disabled Children's Service in developing tailored independence programmes e.g. OCN and Asdan Models. Review programmes undertaken in other LAs.• Review the use of the training flats consider where they should be on a continuum of support.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the GRAMO scheme is embedded within the support continuum. • Review the transition process to the 16+ Teams, to ensure the requirements of the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 are met. • Develop a comprehensive support package for care leavers: Including; production of a handbook, development of independent living skills, tenancy readiness. • Accessible advocacy provision.
Stage 2	Planning accommodation and support options
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to streamline the current pathways to access accommodation and support and develop one clear multi-agency pathway. To include care leavers that access support from Adult Social Care and require specialist accommodation. • Review the remit of all panels currently in operation to establish where duplication of roles exists; work in partnership with other agencies to develop one accommodation panel for care leavers. • Review levels of provision based on projected demand in particular with regard to the When I'm Ready and Supported Lodging Schemes. There has been a steady increase in the number of children 16+ years of age requiring support in recent years, this is likely to continue. This is reflected in the increase in the number of care leavers remaining with foster carers post 18 years as part of the When I'm Ready programme or in a Supported Lodging arrangement. • Undertake further detailed analysis of the permanency plans for the children looked after in the 10 to 15 years cohort to improve/support. • To undertake the consistent capture of data and analysis of the support provided to young people leaving care 18-25 years. • To work with colleagues across RCT to identify the potential for combining other funding streams. This to include looking for opportunities within the Children and Communities and Housing Support Grants (which include Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention Grant ,Rent Smart Wales and St David's Day Fund) funding streams from the 1st April 2019.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore specialist foster care support i.e. mother & baby foster placements.
Stage 3	Reducing housing crisis for when young people experience difficulties in maintaining their accommodation and the support needed to get them back on track.
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with colleagues in Housing to develop a clear emergency accommodation pathway for care leavers in RCT. To develop alternative models of intervention to B&Bs. Review the role of the Positive Pathway's Project worker located within the Resilient Families Service going forward. Ensure it is part of the support continuum. To develop single assessment placements for young people 16+ years. Monitor and support care leavers' access to the new floating support service. To compile an annual report outlining the reasons for tenancy failures.
Stage 4	Ensuring young people are ready to move on to longer term accommodation and their own tenancy.
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear and accessible information for care leavers on benefit entitlement and who to contact for support and advice. To pursue the Local Authority acting as guarantor for young people looked after under 18 years of age in private rented accommodation and post 18 years. To explore the development of a mentoring scheme to support care leavers in maintaining their independence.

A multi-agency implementation group has been established and meets on a quarterly basis to drive forward the Accommodation and Support Strategy for Young People 16+ Years of Age Leaving Care.

4. PROGRESS

4.1 Stage 1: Helping young people to gain skills in preparation for independence and building resilience.

- 4.1.1 Funding agreed via the Youth Support Grant. Youth Worker appointed and in post to take forward the development of independence skills. To explore accredited training opportunities available to young people e.g. OCN/ Asdan and to link to the training schemes currently in operation e.g. GRAMO.
- 4.1.2 Funding has been obtained via the Youth Support Grant to develop a clear and accessible electronic information guide for care leavers in RCT which supports them to live within their community. It will include who to contact for support and advice, what support Children's Services provide (what they should expect from us), information on financial entitlement, housing options (Inc. supported housing) and tenancy readiness, education/learning opportunities and employment.

The information guide will complement and link to the work being undertaken by the Getting Ready Project run by Voices from Care, supported by Children in Wales.

4.2 Stage 2: Planning accommodation and support options

- 4.2.1 A Mercury Project Team is currently working to develop an accommodation pathway for young people 16+ years of age where accommodation is highlighted as a need through their care and support plan.

The key actions for the project have been identified as follows:

- Review all the pathways currently in operation.
- Review the remit of all the panels, consider the terms of reference, eligibility criteria, documentation used.
- Analysis of complex multi-agency processes, identifying areas where more efficient and effective practice could be achieved.
- Develop a draft pathway by the summer 2020.

The aim, is the development of a multi-agency pathway for young people to access supported accommodation in RCT.

- 4.2.2 Additional funding has been obtained to expand the Supported Lodging Scheme in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.2.3 An analysis of the permanency plans of children looked after aged 10 to 15 years has been undertaken as part of the Children Looked After Quality Assurance Panel Work Plan 2019-2020. A key recommendation from the analysis has been to facilitate and support reunification planning within Children's Services. A

Reunification Social Worker has been appointed (further post out to advert) to drive forward reunification planning.

4.2.4 The accommodation type of young people leaving care 18-25 years is now recorded on Children's Services Information System – WCCIS, the Welsh Community Care Information System.

4.2.5 A number of opportunities for Children's Services 16+ Teams to participate in time limited pilot projects have been identified, these include:

- The Getting Ready Project; the 16+ Teams are working with Voices from Care Cymru and Children in Wales to take forward the Getting Ready Project, which has a focus on facilitating wrap –around community support for young people transitioning from care.
- The Housing First Project delivered by Llamau, which aims to improve the housing option for young people with highly complex and challenging needs, who are disengaged from traditional pathway supported accommodation based services.

4.2.6 Specialist foster carer support is being taken forward as part of RCT's Placement Commissioning Strategy.

4.3 Stage 3: Reducing housing crisis for when young people experience difficulties in maintaining their accommodation and the support needed to get them back on track.

4.3.1 As previously noted a Mercury Project Team is currently working to develop an accommodation pathway for young people 16+ years of age which will include consideration of an emergency accommodation pathway.

4.3.2 From January 2020 the Positive Pathway's Project (funding available until April 2021) will be delivered directly by the Resilient Families Service.

4.3.3 The new floating support service is being monitored via the implementation group.

4.4 Stage 4: Ensuring young people are ready to move on to longer term accommodation and their own tenancy.

4.4.1 As previously noted, funding has been obtained via the Youth Support Grant to develop a clear and accessible electronic information guide for care leavers in RCT which supports them to live within their community.

4.4.2 To ascertain/explore whether there are any potential benefits of linking the development of a mentoring scheme to support care leavers with the work undertaken by the volunteer co-ordinator located in the Youth Offending Service.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 This is an information report; therefore, no consultation is required.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 Where required funding opportunities are being explored to meet the cost of new developments.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 The legal requirements for Children Looked After are set down within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

8.2 Further legislation and guidance considered included:

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Children's Commissioner for Wales; Hidden Ambitions Reports 2017 & 2018.
- Welsh Government's Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood.
- RCT's Homelessness Strategy.

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

9.1 This consultation links to the corporate priority of promoting independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring that the Council listens to the people it provides for.

9.2 It also contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

10. **CONCLUSION**

During the last twelve months work has been undertaken to take forward the implementation of the 16+ Accommodation and Support Strategy for Young People 16+ Years of Age Leaving Care 2019-2022. Further work is required if all the objectives identified in the Strategy are to be achieved. Feedback from young people will also be sought to ensure that the Strategy continues to meet their needs.