



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: 4

**Welsh Government Children
Looked After Reduction
Expectations**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Scrutiny Members of the Welsh Government's Children Looked After Reduction Expectations.

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

The First Minister of Wales has highlighted the increasing numbers of Looked after Children in Wales as a priority area for action. He is clear that too many children are taken away from their families into the care system in Wales. He set the following priority areas for reduction:

- The number of children in care.
- The number of children placed out of county.
- The number of children placed out of Wales.
- The number of children removed from parents with a Learning Disability

3.1 In order to understand what was needed to achieve these priorities the Welsh Government established a Looked After Children Technical Group, to work co-productively with local authorities to develop an approach to achieving the expectations set. Membership included the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru.

3.2 The technical group established a Looked After Children Engagement Team that visited each of the 22 local authorities in Wales during April and May 2019. The purpose of these visits was to undertake focused, bespoke discussions, using existing local and national data to understand the situation within each Local Authority.

3.3 The Engagement Team held three-hour conversations with each local authority's Director of Social Services, Head of Children's Services, the Chief Executive, its Child Care Lawyer, and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services. They undertook detailed conversations about the complex factors and local narrative behind the rise in numbers of children in care.

3.4 Discussions were informed by existing national and local data to ensure conversations were bespoke to each organisation and their particular demographic profile. A Local Authority Looked after Children Conversation Framework was developed to support bespoke conversations and used by each local authority to 'lead and identify' the key issues within their council and children's services. The Framework included:

- Reducing the need for, and number of, children entering care.
- Positive, stable placements.
- Enhancing exit strategies that better enable exit from care.
- Managing the business.
- Co-production and bespoke targets.

3.5 A summary of Local Authority Visits showed that:

- The numbers of children looked after had increased in the year 2018-2019
- All Local Authorities had implemented Early Help/Edge of Care Services.
- Children subject to care orders placed with parents or other persons with parental responsibility had increased.
- Most Local Authority reported challenges with the court system.
- Placements for Children Looked After were not sufficient.
- There was a need for dynamic health interventions (behavioural therapeutic complex care and medical) to stop escalation.

4. RCT REDUCTION EXPECTATIONS

4.1 A report was submitted to Welsh Government in May 2019 (see Appendix 1) that set out the children looked after data at the time and the priorities for action. The priorities identified were:

- Vulnerability Profiling - using data from Social Care, Health, and Education, to identify children with vulnerabilities earlier and provide targeted supports
- Develop a reunification model
- Develop a family resolution meeting process.
- Develop Parental Advocacy.
- Review the Kinship Care guidance and SGO guidance to ensure that it is delivering the necessary outcomes.
- Extend support for care leavers prior to and after they give birth.
- Developing alternative support to reduce unplanned CLA admissions

4.2 A number of these priorities depended on services being developed and monies being made available through ICF funding. Although funding was eventually agreed (agreement was also needed from Welsh Government) the actual release of funding and recruitment to crucial posts is almost complete with the posts associated with the reunification model and the support to care leavers expected to be appointed/ implemented to by April 2020.

4.3 The Welsh Government, however, came back to Local Authorities in July 2019 and asked each Local Authority to make a commitment to set targets to reduce their looked after children population against each of the priority areas.

- The number of children in care.
- The number of children placed out of county.
- The number of children placed out of Wales.
- The number of children removed from parents with a Learning Disability

RCT set their targets which can be seen in Appendix 2.

5. RCT CURRENT POSITION

5.1 In October 2019 the Welsh Government asked for a progress report (Appendix 3). The report showed that since April 2019 the number of children looked after had increased and this is a trend that has continued during the year with the number of children looked after at present being 702.

5.2 The increases appear in the following areas:

- 23% of admissions are children aged under 1 year old. With 24 babies needing to be accommodated from September 2019 to the end of this financial year.
- The number of children aged 9 becoming looked after has increased from 2% for last year to 7% in 2019
- The number of children aged 13 becoming looked after has increased from 3% for last year to 7% in 2019.
- The number of children being brought into care aged 16+ has increased by 3 children compared to last year's figures, from 8 (5%) children in 2018 to 11 (6%) children in 2019.
- 76% of looked after children were residing within RCT on the 31/12/2019.
- 171 children were in placements outside RCT on 31/12/2019 and of these 12 were residing outside Wales.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

7. CONSULTATION

This is an information report therefore no consultation is required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

10.1 This report 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.

10.2 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

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 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. Within RCT the overriding principle has continued to be children only become looked after at the right time and for as long as it is appropriate.
- 11.2 The First Minister has recognised the requirement for a whole systems approach to ensure a reduction in the children looked after population and that it is equally important and essential to focus on the whole system when determining how to achieve and deliver change to safely reduce the number of Looked After Children in Wales.
- 11.3 This will allow resources to be directed to provide the right support to families earlier when they become known to services, thereby reducing and preventing the need for children to be taken away from their families. It has also recognised however, statutory intervention with children, young people, and family life extends beyond local authority responsibilities. The roles, responsibilities and practice of the Judiciary and CAFCASS Cymru are critical in determining the legal status of children and young people.

[Name] Local Authority Children’s Service – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Service Description: provides a range of services which protect and support children, young people and their families or carers (local authority to add their words here)

RCT Children Services sits within the Community and Children Services Group and is primarily concerned with the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. It provides a range of services that are divided into the following areas:

- Early Intervention Prevention- including Early Years, Flying start and YEPPS
- IAA/MASH
- Edge of Care
- Intensive Intervention
- Children Looked After
- Safeguarding and Supports
- YOS

Defined service users: Looked after children, their families and carers

Headline performance measures:

- reduction in the number of children in care
- reduction in the number of children placed out of county
- reduction in the number of children placed out of Wales
- reduction in the number of children removed from parents with a learning disability

Proposed Reduction Expectations

Year One (2019/20): Stabilise CLA population

Year Two (2020/21): 0-2% reduction

Year Three (2021/22): 0-2% reduction

What other measures have you agreed to support the headline performance measures?

(To include any bespoke additional performance measures agreed or of relevance)

Early Intervention Prevention:

% of children and young people requiring intervention from statutory services.

% of children 0-7 requiring interventions from statutory services.

% of families with increased resilience following completed intervention with Resilient Families Services.

% of families affected by disability with increased resilience following completed intervention with Resilient Families Services

Miskin Edge of Care Services: Miskin work to contribute to the following performance indicators:

% of children supported to remain with their family

% of children looked after returned home from care during the year.

% of children looked after on the 31st March who have had 3 or more placements during the year.

Number of children and young people looked after

The length of time that children and young people remain in the looked after children system.

How are we doing?

E.g to include data/tables highlighting change in performance - Number of looked after children in local authority at 31 March, Placed outside LA (in Wales), Placed outside Wales, number of looked after children removed from parents with a LD and any other bespoke measures which support the headline measures.

676 children looked after at 31st March 2019 (no increase from previous year)

207 children looked after placed with family (third of the CLA population)

159 placed out of county- 41 with family members.

11 placed outside Wales- 7 placed with relatives, 2 independent sector foster carers, 1 independent sector residential care, 1 in secure.

164 became looked after during 2018-2019 (37% did not become looked after) out of these:

3 removed from parents with a learning difficulty, 59 because of parents substance misuse, 33 because of parents mental health

32P% who BLA were under 1 year old

54% where under 4 years old

9% where 15 years old which has increased from 3%

78% of CLA are on Care Orders
 8% are Section 76

35 were emergency admissions (28 not previously known)
 47 were unplanned admissions (placement breakdown)

22% of 10-15 year olds being looked after during 2017/2018 had been looked after since aged 0-3years old
 59% of 10-15 year olds being looked after during 2017/2018 had been looked after since aged 4-10 years old

Early intervention Services (Resilient Families) received 1608 referrals in 2018-2019 (25% were self-referrals) 95% successfully completed interventions and increased their resilience.
 19% were stepped down from Children statutory services and only 6% were stepped up.

Story behind the headline measures (progress since the last reporting period):
 Children services were restructured into an east/west divide for consistency and sustainability.
 Delivered an evidence based services delivery programme through the introduction of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Framework (MARAF)
 A reviewed and restructured of the CLA Placement Panel and CLA Quality Assurance Group(Chaired by a Head of Service) was undertaken by an independent organisations and recommendations implemented.
 Invested in strengthening Legal Services to enhance the PLO Process.
 The capacity for the early identification of vulnerable families was expanded through the Resilient Families Services which provided supports to increase resilience and intervene early to support children and families at risk.
 Appointments were made for Family Therapists in our Edge of Care Service.

Key partners who are supporting us

Education
 Health
 Need further support from Judiciary, Police, CAMHS

What further activity will you be taking place to support your reduction expectation plans?

<p>One access point for IAA, referrals to early intervention prevention services and statutory services was implemented to ensure people are having the right help at the right time and at the right level.</p> <p>Greater emphasis was placed on permanency, increasing discharges through SGO and Adoption and working with families and children and young people to reduce the amount of time children spend in the care system by appointing two SGO workers and a dedicated Adoption Senior Practitioner.</p> <p>A Placement Commissioning Strategy has been developed that is in the process of being implemented.</p> <p>A Housing Strategy for 16+ has been produced with young people and is in the process of being developed.</p>	<p>Early intervention Prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability Profiling- using data from Social Care, Health, and Education, to identify children with vulnerabilities earlier and provide targeted supports • Develop a reunification model • Develop family resolution meeting process. • Develop Parental Advocacy • Review the Kinship Care guidance and SGO guidance to ensure that it is delivering the necessary outcomes. • Extend supports for care leavers prior to and after they give birth. • Developing alternative supports to reduce unplanned CLA admissions
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Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Children’s Service

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- Early Intervention Prevention, including Early Years, Flying Start and YEPPS
- IAA/Mash
- Edge of Care
- Intensive Intervention
- Children Looked After
- Safeguarding and Supports
- YOS

Headline performance measures:

- reduction in the number of children in care
- reduction in the number of children placed out of county
- reduction in the number of children placed out of Wales
- reduction in the number of children removed from parents with a learning disability

Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children in care

Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children placed out of county

<p>Year One (2019/20): Stabilise population</p> <p>Year Two (2020/21): 0-2% reduction</p> <p>Year Three (2021/22): 0-2% reduction</p>	<p>Year One (2019/20): 0-2% reduction</p> <p>Year Two (2020/21): 0-2% reduction</p> <p>Year Three (2021/22):0-2% reduction</p>
<p>Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children placed out of Wales</p> <p>Year One (2019/20): 18% (reduce from 11 to 9)</p> <p>Year Two (2020/21): 22% (reduce from 9 to 7)</p> <p>Year Three (2021/22):Stabilise population</p>	<p>Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children removed from parents with a learning disability</p> <p>Year One (2019/20): 33% reduction(3 cases reduce by one)</p> <p>Year Two (2020/21): Stabilise population</p> <p>Year Three (2021/22): Stabilise population</p>
<p>Please briefly provide an explanation of your overall approach to out of county and cross-border placements and your plans to increase placement capacity?</p> <p>Systems are in place that only allows for children and young people to be placed out of county or out of country if all alternatives have been explored. The decision to place outside RCT can only be taken by a Services Manager/Head of Services and they have to agree in writing why they have agreed to this. This is then reviewed/challenged weekly at Placement Panel and monthly at Children Looked after Quality</p>	

Assurance Group. The Placement Panel also look at those children that can be moved back to RCT weekly and a plan of action is agreed and implementation monitor.

Increasing Placement Capacity by:

- Develop a residential property for a maximum of two young people to be used as a 12 week assessment centre in order for the young persons need to be assessed and avoid emergency placements.
- Develop a flexible staff group that can support the new residential property, in house foster carers and provided additional support for residential units to avoid placement breakdowns.
- Training for in-house Residential staff and foster carers in the Trauma Recovery Model to enable carers to be able to cope with those very vulnerable young people with very high behaviour needs, to reduce placement breakdown.
- Appoint two dedicated staff (2) to apply a reunification model
- Work with independent providers to establish provision within RCT.
- Developed a Regional Front Door for Fostering Recruitment, which includes a dedicated marketing office, and a system that allows for enquires to be responded to through an interactive web site.
- Develop a Foster Friendly RCT Approach to recruit and encourage recruitment of foster carers to RCT.

Any additional text to describe your rationale?

The numbers of children with parents with learning difficulties is very small and we have always within the Local Authority supported those with Learning Difficulties to retain care of their children. The definition we use is the one used in the Children Receiving Care and Support Census which is embedded within our systems to ensure consistency of approach. We are working on developing a process whereby ongoing supports can be provided to the parent through using statutory, early intervention and community supports.

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Local Authority Reduction Expectation Plans – Progress Statement (1st April – 31st Sept 2019)- APPENDIX 3

[Name] Local Authority Children’s Service Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
<p>Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children in care</p> <p>2019/20 proposed reduction :</p> <p>0%-2% reduction</p> <p>Achievement to date (1st April – 31st Sept) :</p> <p>The numbers of children looked after has risen by 19 (696) since April 2019. This is due to a number of large families groups becoming looked after:</p> <p>April: sibling group of 5, 2x sibling groups of three.</p> <p>May: sibling group of 6</p> <p>August: sibling group 5</p> <p>September: sibling group 4</p> <p>In June we had three babies from different families where they had 5-10 siblings previous removed who were either placed for adoption or with kinship carers.</p>	<p>Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children placed out of county</p> <p>2019/20 proposed reduction:</p> <p>0%-2% reduction</p> <p>Achievement to date (1st April – 31st Sept) :</p> <p>The number of children out of county has decreased to 152 from 159. 76% of children looked after are placed within RCT.</p> <p>Narrative and proposed next steps :</p> <p>Increasing Placement Capacity continues to be a priority. However the lead in time for the proposed developments has taken longer than anticipated. Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A residential property for a maximum of two young people to be used as a 12 week assessment centre in order for the young persons need to be assessed and avoid emergency placements as now been refurbished and gained registration for CIW (registration obtained September 2019). • Staff have been appointed (September 2019 due to delay in ICF being agreed) that can support the new residential

168 children looked after ceased to be looked after from Oct 18 to the present time. Which is a 4:3% increase in numbers for the same period last year.

44% of children leaving care return home to family/extended family

30% of children that ceased being looked after over the last 12 months were 16+.

Narrative and proposed next steps :

Work continues to be undertaken on the following developments

- Reunification model developed, staff recently appointed to take this forward.
- Family resolution meeting process developed in process of being implemented.
- Parental Advocacy still under development
- Kinship Care guidance and SGO guidance amended and in process of implementation.
- Extend supports for care leavers prior to and after they give birth: task and finish group set up to develop a process.

property, in house foster carers and provided additional support for residential units to avoid placement breakdowns.

- Commissioned training for in-house Residential staff and foster carers in the Trauma Recovery Model to enable carers to be able to cope with those very vulnerable young people with very high behaviour needs, to reduce placement breakdown. This will commence January 2020.
- Two dedicated staff (2) to specialise in reunification have been appointed and will take up post in November 2019.
- Placement Strategy finalised and a Position Market Statement produced to work with the independent sector to provide the type of placements in RCT that RCT require. .
- A Regional Front Door for Fostering Recruitment has been developed which includes a dedicated marketing office, and a system that allows for enquires to be responded to through an interactive web site. Initial indications are that enquires have increased (35) and that a number have proceeded to full assessment(4).
- Obtained corporate agreement that RCT will be a Foster Friendly Organisation and that staff that are foster carers can have support and time off from work to attend foster care reviews etc. This is to encourage staff within RCT to become foster carers for RCT.

<p>Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children placed out of Wales</p> <p>2019/20 proposed reduction :</p> <p>Reduction 18% reduce from 11 to 9.</p> <p>Achievement to date (1st April – 31st Sept):</p> <p>The number of children placed outside Wales increased by one due to a young person needing a secure placement.</p> <p>Narrative and proposed next steps :</p> <p>This is a difficult one to make any head way on. The placements outside Wales are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 placed with relatives • 2 independent sector Foster Carers. • 1 independent sector residential care. 	<p>Proposed Reduction Expectations – numbers of children removed from parents with a learning disability</p> <p>2019/20 proposed reduction :</p> <p>33% 3 cases reduced by one.</p> <p>Achievement to date (1st April – 31st Sept):</p> <p>Narrative and proposed next steps:</p> <p>There has been no increase in the numbers of children removed from parents with a learning disability. The ones in the system are coming to a conclusion and therefore the impact on figures will not be realised until further in the year.</p>

- 2 in secure.

The children and young people within these placements have been there a considerable time and therefore it is not in the child's best interest to return them to Wales at this time. The 2 young people in secure have now returned to RCT and this will be reflected in the next quarter figures.