
Out of Area Placements Panel - Looked After Children Placed out of County during 2015 / 2016

1. Reasons for the Report

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to comply with the requirements of The Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the associated statutory guidance 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future'. This report covers the ninth year of the panel, from April 2015 to March 2016.
- 1.2 The report provides information about the circumstances in which Out of Area Placement arrangements have been made to meet children's needs.
- 1.3 The regulations and guidance set out requirements of local authorities when local authorities and their partner agencies are making placement arrangements for children who are looked-after.
- 1.4 The Regulations require that authorities pay particular attention to the arrangements for "Out of Area Placements", that is any placement of children outside the local authority's geographical area.
- 1.5 Local authorities are required to establish an inter-agency panel, comprising of senior representatives of Education, Health and Children's Services to consider any proposals to place children out of area.
- 1.6 The report is not intended to provide information about individual children but to demonstrate how the panel has exercised its responsibilities in considering the circumstances of children whom it is proposed require an "out of area" placement.

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

2 Background

- 2.1 All but one of the meetings of the panel have been quorate with representatives attending from the three constituent agencies.
- 2.2 All meetings of the panel have complied with the statutory time scales. The December 2015 panel was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. The cases that were due for discussion were discussed at the January 2016

Panel.

- 2.3 A Panel Administrator is responsible for the coordination of the panel, and recording of discussions and decision making. All relevant documentation concerning respective cases is forwarded to the appropriate case accountable case manager, once the minutes are approved by the panel chair.
- 2.4 In the 12 months covered by this report the panel has discussed **294** children.
- 2.5 Out of Area Placements can be divided into three broad categories:
 - 2.5.1 Placements that address shortcomings in the local placement availability,
 - 2.5.2 Placements that provide a level of specialist care not available in Cardiff, and
 - 2.5.3 Placements for children whose needs are such that they need to be located away from their local area.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the categories in the paragraph above are not mutually exclusive, for example a child might require a specialist placement as well as a placement outside the local area.
- 2.7 Sometimes an Out of Area Placement will be more local to the child's home and community than other available placements *within* the Cardiff boundary, for example a placement located just out side the boundary in the west of the city when the home address of the child is just inside the boundary on the same west side could be closer than placements on the east of the city.
- 2.8 A number of the Out of Area Placements covered by this report have come about despite the location not being specifically requested by the referring social worker reflecting the non availability of suitable placements in Cardiff to meet the children's needs.

Trends

- 2.9 Unless specifically requested a Cardiff placement will always be initially researched. It is the intention of the Council to wherever possible place Cardiff children with Cardiff carers. Placements identified outside the boundaries of Cardiff will be either in response to a specific location being requested, or where no other placement in Cardiff is available to meet the needs of the child.
- 2.10 Cardiff continues to struggle to place children who display challenging behaviour or who require specialist placements within the County. Apart from independent specialist schools for children with complex needs, Cardiff only has one other residential provision locally which provides care for children on the autistic spectrum. Consequently children who require a more specialist service need to be placed many miles away for their home county. This situation also applies to Secure Accommodation provision.

- 2.11 For children who can not be placed with others, or who have difficulties which prevent them from being placed with mainstream carers, suitable 'in area' placements are equally in short supply. This group of children would include those with sexualised behaviour, those who abscond, or those who are in danger of being exploited or general challenging behaviour.
- 2.12 'In area' placements for children within these categories have been difficult to identify, consequently these children have needed to be placed out of area.
- 2.13 Where it is necessary, an Out of Area Placement will be specifically requested to support the child care plan. Some children may need to be placed a distance from Cardiff to help break patterns of behaviour, provide continuity for education or improve contact with siblings.
- 2.14 Although there a number of placement providers (both external providers and our own internal fostering and residential services), available placements within the Cardiff area are limited and are in short supply. It is unclear at this time the proportion of cases referred to the panel that concerned specifically requested Out of Area Placements.

3 Children placed out of area without prior referral to the Panel

- 3.1 **79** main fostering placements and **19** respite placement arrangements were presented retrospectively to the Panel. **26** residential placements were presented retrospectively to the Panel. **170** cases that were discussed at panel were updates that the panel had requested in order to monitor the child's/young person's progress at their placement and to discuss cases where Health and Education funding had not previously been agreed.
- 3.2 The regulations recognise that local authorities have to respond to children's needs in a timely way and provide for retrospective consideration by the panel of placement arrangements. The regulations allow decisions to be made between Panel meetings by the Director of Children's Services. Arrangements agreed by the Director of Children's Services are presented for approval at the next meeting of the Panel.
- 3.3 Situations may arise where it is necessary to immediately safeguard a child or others; these occasions may include the sudden ending of an existing placement due to at risk behaviour of the child or an allegation of inappropriate harmful behaviour by the carer. Placements may need to be identified urgently and the child be placed without prior referral to Panel. In these situations, approval from the Director of Children's Services is obtained before the child is placed. In situations where a placement ends due to issues that are regarded to be unreasonable or inconsistent with existing standards, Managers of Children's Service's Looked After Children accommodation service will seek investigation and explanation from the responsible provider agency.

- 3.4 With regard to request for respite care placement, it was observed during previous reporting, that a number of requests occurred at short notice which could have been referred, if known about, to the previous Panel. These situations included holiday arrangements for the foster carers, where the provider knew about the arrangements in good time, but had failed to inform the Local Authority. Whilst the situation has improved and the providers now working in partnership with the Local Authority, there are occasions when carers do request respite at short notice. As a means to address this some providers are insisting that carers need to request respite 4 – 6 weeks in advance, otherwise the request is not processed.

4 Secure Accommodation

- 4.1 During the year the Panel dealt with **1** placement arrangement for young people who needed secure accommodation.
- 4.2 Cardiff does not have a provision for secure accommodation within the County. The only provision in Wales is located in Neath. Consequently any request for a secure placement will require the young person being placed out of area.

5 Children and Young People with a Statement of Special Educational Needs

- 5.1 **87** children and young people for whom the Panel considered Out of Area Placements had a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

6 Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

- 6.1 **37** of the children and young people were identified as requiring Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- 6.2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are provided by a Cardiff Service that is part of a wider clinical network covering a number of the South Wales local authorities. The network provides CAMHS services, usually from a local CAMH service, to looked after children placed within its area who are placed outside their “home” local authority.
- 6.3 In some circumstances children placed out of area have continued to receive services from CAMH services based in Cardiff and, more exceptionally the Cardiff CAMH Service has on occasions continued to provide services to children placed outside the area of the clinical network.
- 6.4 Generally where children are placed out of area in placements that are also outside the CAMHS clinical network, the CAMH service liaises with and provides information to, the CAMHS service that is local to the child’s proposed placement. It is important in making placement arrangements for children who require a CAMH service that the availability of an accessible service is established *before* the placement is agreed.

6.5 7 placements were made outside the local CAMHS area.

7 Community Intensive Treatment Team (CITT)

7.1 During the year, **3** young people needing Out of Area Placements were receiving CAMHS services from the Cardiff based Community Intensive Treatment Team (CITT) immediately prior to the placement being proposed.

7.2 The CITT is led by a consultant psychiatrist. Its purpose is to provide intensive support for children who prior to the introduction of the CITT would have been placed in tier 4 CAMHS services, primarily in specialist hospitals outside of Cardiff. The NHS introduced the CITT in Cardiff and elsewhere to promote the “re-patriation” of children to Cardiff. The CITT is funded through Health Commission Wales and is a tier 3 service.

8 Continuing Health Care

8.1 The Panel dealt with placements for **11** children whose needs met the criteria for continuing health care. The costs of placements for these children were shared with the NHS.

9 Respite arrangements

9.1 The Panel considers all out of area respite care placement arrangements as part of the initial arrangements for the child’s main placement.

9.2 The panel dealt with **14** proposed respite placements and **19** retrospective respite placement arrangements. It should be noted that a decision was made by the panel chair that retrospective respite placements did not need to be presented to the panel for approval therefore this figure is likely to be lower than previous years.

10 Sharing of costs

10.1 Over the year, **17** placements were funded on a bipartite basis between Children’s Services and Education.

10.2 Over the year, **10** placements were funded on a bipartite basis between Children’s Services and the NHS.

10.3 Over the year, there were **2** placements funded on a tripartite basis by Children’s Services, S&LL and the NHS

10.3.1 Over the year, there were **0** placements solely funded by the Local Health Board.

10.4 Respite fostering placements are funded by Children’s Services. Where a child requires a residential respite placement, Health will also sometimes contribute.

- 10.5 Over the year, there were **17** cases where no agreement was given at the panel by Health for funding. The main reasons for no agreement were that either no request had been made to Health or further information was required by the Health Funding Panel. There were **3** cases where no agreement was given by Education at the panel. This was mainly due to the cases not having been discussed at the Risk Management Panel.
- 10.6 The remainder of the placements in the cohort were funded by Children's Services.

11 Progress

- 11.1 Improvement is being achieved in the inclusion of healthcare and education arrangements as an integral part of placement planning arrangements.
- 11.2 In some instances retrospective approval particularly in relation to respite placements has occurred in the context of the request for approval not being sought in a timely way. It was expected that this would improve as providers and case managing social workers are increasingly aware of the requirements but there is still a need for planning arrangements to be strengthened in order to reduce the high numbers of placement requests that are considered by the Out of Area Panel retrospectively.

12 Next Steps

- 12.1 This report is the ninth annual report to the Children's Management Team (CMT) and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC).
- 12.2 The reporting of the Panel for 2016/17 will cover the period 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017 and will be presented to Children's Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee next year.

The focus for the Looked After Children Service is to strengthen care planning and the timeliness of requests for placements.

The in-house fostering marketing campaign that will be launched in the 2015/2016 financial year with the aim of increasing our numbers of in-house, in area placements, in order to reduce the numbers of children who need to be placed externally due to a lack of in-house placements.

13 Issues

There are a high number of cases presented retrospectively to the panel. Improved planning would reduce the number of children placed in an emergency situation. The concern with such placements is that there may not have been sufficient enough time to provide the best match for the children which may lead to placement break down in the future. The Operational Manager for Looked After Children now meets with the Team Managers each month to review the case of each child placed out of area to ensure that:-

- the placement is meeting needs
- the care or Pathway plan is being expedited
- explore opportunities to return children/young people to Cardiff
- focus on timely returns to Cardiff where appropriate

14 Financial Implications

14.1 There are significant financial implications in respect of the report. Please see below a breakdown of the costings for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016:-

Residential

Spend	2014/15	2015/16
Children's Services	£9,223,839	£9,095,588
Includes income from		
UHB	£541,926	£395,362
Schools	£545,025	£540,806

Number of Placements During Year	Total for 2014/15	Total for 2015/16
Secure	1	2
Residential	73	72
Residential (CWD)	16	15

Current Placements at Year End	2014/15	2015/16
Secure	0	0
Residential	50	46
Residential (CWD)	9	5

Fostering

2015/16 **184** children placed out of county at a cost of **£5,571,588**

NB This figure is the number of children and not the number of episodes

2014/15 **196** children placed out of county at a cost of **£4,999,546**

NB This figure is the number of children and not the number of episodes

- 14.2 The cost of Out of Area Placements is a significant issue for all three agencies.
- 14.3 An analysis of the figures for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 shows that the number of retrospective residential placements reduced from 44 to 26 in 2015/2016. The number of out of area fostering placements reduced from 89 to 79.

15 Legal Implications

- 15.1 There are no specific legal implications in respect of the report. It is prepared to comply with the requirements of the regulations referred to above.

16 Recommendations

- 16.1 It is recommended that the members consider the report and highlight any areas they might wish to consider as a substantive item.

TONY YOUNG
Director of Social Services
13 July 2016