



## Local Authority Regional/National Commissioning Arrangements via CCSR

The Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR) is an e-sourcing tool. Its purpose is to support local authorities to find appropriate placements / care settings for looked after children in Wales. It is a joined-up government initiative, with partners including the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales. The service is hosted by the Local Government Data Unit; funded originally by the Welsh Government now funded through a Consortium partnership of Local Authorities and Providers.

CCSR is centred on a real-time, online database. The database holds details on a large number of accommodation providers - including independent foster agencies, independent children's homes, charitable service providers and residential special schools. In addition to information on the business, the database includes considerable details on their individual care settings. These details – including whether there are vacancies - are updated by providers ensuring local authorities have the most up-to-date information possible.

The database also facilitates electronic tendering. Local authorities can securely post information about a child's placement requirements inviting providers to respond with potential placement matches in accordance with a defined timescale. Invitations can be restricted in some way (e.g. only framework placements (see further below) or only foster placements) or left open.

Launched in 2006, CCSR increased the speed and efficiency of placement searching whilst at the same time giving local authorities knowledge and access to a much wider market. Prior to its introduction each local authority managed its own list of approved providers. Consecutive searches were conducted by making a series of phone calls to the providers on the list to determine whether they had any potential placements. Electronic tendering effectively allows local authorities to simultaneously search a much large number of providers. This has reduced duplication of effort and generated cost savings, but more importantly, it has meant local authorities benefit from a wider selection of possible placements when considering what represents the best match for a child.

Moreover, CCSR has facilitated the sharing of best practice in the development of standardised processes and forms for local authorities to follow when completing searches. These forms enable providers to have a much clearer understanding of the needs of the child when they are considering whether to propose a placement and package of support.

CCSR was a critical tool in the development of a common contract to govern the placements of looked after children. The All Wales Pre-Placement Agreement was signed by the 22 Welsh local authorities in 2008. All providers registered on CCSR have been required to agree to sign the Agreement and thereby comply with the conditions contained therein. These included the following expectations:-

- All details of individual care settings are accurate and up to date, including the information on available services and facilities.
- Services and facilities are realistic (e.g. it is inappropriate to say that speech therapy is available through the provision if it is actually provided in the usual way by a local NHS facility)



- Vacancies in provision are updated on at least a weekly basis.
- Only actual vacancies are to be recorded; these will be either those available immediately or those available from a specified date.

There are in excess of 200 independent providers registered on CCSR<sup>1</sup> and thousands of individual placements.

The fifteen local authorities in South and Mid Wales collaborated further by establishing the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (the 4Cs) in 2012. The 4Cs is a regional commissioning team. It has developed, and now manages, framework agreements for commissioning the following types of placements: i) fostering; ii) residential care; iii) parent and baby foster placements. Following a full procurement exercise in 2012, a total of 30 organisations were successfully validated and entered onto one of the framework agreements. Validation was based on the optimum combination of quality, local capacity and price. North Wales joined the Fostering Framework in 2014 and have the option to use the Residential Framework if need exists. This makes the Frameworks a genuine Welsh Collaboration to improving placement commissioning and contracting.

A further procurement exercise was completed in 2016 and the current framework agreements have the option to extend to 2022. The Framework Providers are listed for reference at Appendix 1 of this document. These providers have won their place on the framework through rigorous service quality and business scrutiny. Annual quality checks are completed and all providers are committed to developing their service provision in Wales in response to clear needs analysis presented by local authorities.

As signatories to the framework, the local authorities contractually agree to search (via CCSR) for placements with providers on the framework in the first instance. If there are no suitable placements proposed following a framework search then the local authority can open the search to all providers on CCSR. Searches 'off framework' are open to the 200+ providers on CCSR.

4C's links with CSSIW so that all providers registered have up to date Inspection Reports available and are informed of any care standards concerns. If a provider has care standard or safeguarding issues CCSR can temporarily conceal a provider from tendering for placements until standards have improved.

The improved commissioning practices which followed the introduction of CCSR are a key component in local authorities strategies to secure improved placement matches for our looked after children. The Framework is outcomes focussed and participation through a Young Commissioner's programme is at the core of the Framework. Of course identifying a successful match is far more difficult when searches are completed in an emergency. Wherever possible, local authorities try to search for placements in a planned way, while recognising the nature of safeguarding work will always have some same day emergencies, the vast majority of placements can and should be planned to support the best outcomes possible for the child. Guidance on using CCSR recommends running searches for a minimum of 2 -3 days where possible, based on provider feedback of how long it takes to review a tender, complete a thorough matching exercise, discuss matches with potential carers and then tender a child specific rather than generic response.

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<sup>1</sup> As at May 2016  
4Cs.ccsr



Capacity challenges in the current fostering market <sup>2</sup> extend across local authority, charitable and independent provision. Consortium partners have made a commitment to work together to tackle this issue by working together in Wales. Welsh Government has also recognised these capacity issues through the funding of a National Fostering Framework exercise. Lack of capacity in the fostering market is inevitably having a knock on effect to capacity in the residential market. While the capacity issue is tackled it is important that all commissioners optimise use of existing capacity and follow best practice guidance in the commissioning process to maximise the potential for good matching despite scarcity of resource. A key element of best practice is optimising the use of CCSR.

A substantial investment by 4C's in the upgrade of CCSR commenced in September 2016. There is a 5 Phase Programme which is due to be completed by April 2018. The upgrade includes review and amendment to functionality with user level input plus background systems modernisation.

CCSR website <https://www.ccsr-wales.net/portal/>

4Cs support for new users email [4Cs@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:4Cs@rctcbc.gov.uk) or telephone 01443 744589

Further guidance documents:

Placement Process

Framework Search Flowchart

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<sup>2</sup> As at October 2016



## Appendix 1

### Framework Providers