



Consortiwm Comisiynu  
Cymru ar gyfer Plant  
Childrens' Commissioning  
Consortium Cymru  
Cydwethio Er Gwell • All Together Better

## Report for Cardiff Corporate Parenting Board

March 2020

Overview of 4Cs

### *Background*

The Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) is entering its ninth year as a Welsh Consortium. Developed in 2012, when 15 South & Mid Wales Authorities, including Cardiff, came together to address concerns about the variable standards evident in placement commissioning, to maximise the benefit of standardised contracts, terms and conditions, and purchaser economies of scale. The 4C's team is hosted by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council on behalf of the member Authorities. There is a staff team of 7 including the manager Karen Benjamin.

In 2019 the 6 North Wales Authorities became members acknowledging the benefits of joining the Consortium fully. Pembrokeshire is currently joining the Consortium as a full member rather than as a Signatory Authority which means the Consortium will be a fully national approach to children's services placement commissioning.

An ambitious Work Programme is in place with delivery overseen by the 4C's Board made up of Heads of Children's Services and Directors of Social Services. The 4C's manages the All Wales Fostering Framework (2016); the All Wales Residential Framework (2016) and the All Wales Residential Flexible Framework (2019). Each of the member Authorities benefit from these Frameworks. The Frameworks are outcomes focused and have won recognition for the strong ethos of participation, inclusion and young person feedback on outcome delivery. The 2019 Framework has an innovative legal and procurement structure more flexible to the changing needs of Local Authorities and the market.

4C's has a strategic role in national projects where there are links to delivery of improved outcomes for looked after children, placement contracting and commissioning. This work includes representation on the MAG and several task and finish groups. The Team have established strategic relationships with key partners such as CIW and SCW, influencing and shaping practice. The 4Cs team balances this workload of strategic development with operational level response in a busy environment. As strategic projects develop, the frontline pressures in problem solving placement issues should diminish, benefiting all members, however shaping the market is not a quick fix it is a cyclical process which has to be based on robust needs analysis.

## 4C's Vision

# Cydweithio Er Gwell • All Together Better

All together to; work towards delivering better outcomes for children and young people; who require a range of short term placements or long term homes, by increasing placement capacity, choice and promoting robust matching for stability. To support Local Authorities in Wales to; maximise value for money, achieving transparency when commissioning and contracting placements with trusted, good quality providers. To promote co-production and positive relationships across the market ensuring that all Consortium members remain child centred and outcomes focussed in their commissioning and contracting arrangements. Working all together, better outcomes can be achieved.

## 4C's Outcomes for Children & Young People

The Consortium is underpinned by its engagement of children and young people in its work. This year has seen a significant increase in our Young Commissioners Work Programme. We now have a cohort of over 50 children and young people, aged between 7 and 17 who attend our workshops, events and activities. We also work with two recent care leavers.

*Home for our Young Commissioners:* foster families (both local authority and private provision) residential care homes (both local authority and private provision) kinship care arrangements, plus supported flats and independent living arrangements. This breadth of perspective and experience is invaluable to our work.

Recently our Young Commissioners have created:



- \* A new specification for the 2019 residential framework;
- \* A statement to be used in recruiting carers;
- \* A statement of what a good home means to them;
- \* 'This is Me' referral templates including 3 new formats for engaging children to contribute to their placement referrals;
- \* Supporting guidance for social workers on how to engage children in contributing to referrals;
- \* Presentations to be used in training events;
- \* A video explaining the importance of their work;
- \* Surveys for consultation.

In January 2020 a celebration event for our young commissioners was held at the Senedd where they were awarded certificates by the deputy minister in recognition of their hard work. The young commissioners can now work towards an accredited certificate developed in conjunction with Agored Cymru and Children in Wales.

Our Young Commissioners shape their own work programme and their next project over Easter is to consider what they would like to see in carer profiles for children and young people, to assist with matching and introductions.

## Work Programme Snapshot

### Key Work Projects:

1. New Flexible Framework 2019.
2. Mid-Point Reviews 2016 Frameworks.
3. Single Referral Task & Finish Group.
4. Referrals & Matching Toolkit & Training.
5. Needs Analysis & Commissioning Strategies.
6. Market Position Statement Task & Finish Group.
7. Models of Care Workshops & Training.
8. Emergency Dashboard Task & Finish Group.
9. Residential Managers Group initiated.
10. Parent & Child Fostering Forum.
11. Young Commissioners.
12. CCSR Development.
13. National Commissioning Board: Integrated Commissioning Workshops for RPBs, representation of AWHoCS.
14. National Fostering Framework: Strategic Steering Group & support for RDMs
15. Task & Finish Group on Residential Care: Project Management of the Grant. Secure subgroup.
16. Social Care Wales; Residential Care Expert Group.
17. CIW; National Review of Children's Homes Steering Group.

## Commissioning - Priority Projects

1. **Scope, Consultation, Development & Launch of the new All Wales Residential Flexible Framework (2019).** This was the main project for the 4Cs team last year. Specialist legal and procurement advice was outsourced to support an innovative new approach which combines a Framework approach and a Dynamic Purchasing System approach allowing us to maximise the benefits of both and is the best fit for purpose.

Our consultation processes were more extensive than ever before, engaging with framework providers, non framework providers, new market entrants, children and their families, a range of local authority representatives and external stakeholders including health, education, SCW and CIW. 'You said; We Did' Evaluation Reports were produced for all stakeholders and a young person's version also produced.

A full procurement exercise was undertaken and the new Framework launched to timescale on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. For full details of this piece of work we suggest you refer to the relevant project reports. Additional Lots have been added throughout 2019/20 to meet demand.

2. **Implementation of the Placement Commissioning Strategy (PCS) with Local Authorities.** This year we have taken a proactive approach to helping Authorities with their strategies for commissioning placements, both internally and externally. The team has invested significant time in assisting Authorities with needs analysis. There are common themes, learnings and recommendations emerging alongside the strategies which will help Local Authorities produce smarter commissioning intelligence to aid planning in future. We will continue to work with the remaining Authorities to support development of their PCS. The decisions emerging from these strategies will inform a series of Market Position Statements. Providers are positive that a consistent approach across Wales will help them expand business models and secure investment to develop services where there are gaps in the market.

3. **Market Engagement via Provider Forums, Workshops & Individual Meetings** are held regularly to support provider engagement focusing on: placement capacity; local sufficiency; placement quality; business plans and models of care. A relational approach to commissioning is embedded in the team. The vast majority of providers have welcomed more consultation and openness.

4. **Scoping the new 2021 All Wales Fostering Framework** started in January 2020 and is in its very early stages. The project plan will continue until launch in April 2021. Alignment with the National Fostering Framework's strategic priorities is a key opportunity given the timing of the new framework.

## Activity Snapshot

The team manage the Service Level Agreement with Data Cymru who provide the CCSR e-tendering system.

Minimum of quarterly meetings are held to monitor CCSR performance.

Additional meetings this year have been focused on:

- System Upgrade including the interactive message board on live tenders;
- Embedding the new referral form;
- Embedding new matching form;
- Adding new framework;
- Adding new providers;
- Amending price structure to capture cost schedules;
- Creating an emergency dashboard;
- Direct liaison with software developers on specifications;
- System becoming bilingual;
- GDPR compliance;
- Reviewing the SLA with a view to ensuring value for money.

## Contracting - Priority Projects

1. **Redevelopment of the CCSR.** Continued redevelopment of the e-tendering system to make the search process more user friendly and a fast intuitive system. Phase 5 scoping is due to be launched in the coming weeks. Feedback from users, both Local Authority and providers, has been positive with user involvement at scope, development and testing stages. However, there remains a number of business support users who do not use the system as it's designed. This has adverse implications for placement finding, value for money and collating valuable commissioning data which feeds into detailed needs analysis. This is an ongoing focus.
2. **All Wales Referral plus the Referrals & Matching Toolkit.** The toolkit includes a new referral which will be used across Wales by April 2020, comprehensive guidance, 'This is Me' direct work tools for children and best practice examples. The toolkit was co-produced by Local Authorities, Providers and our Young Commissioners. It was launched at the Spring Forum 2019. The best hope is this will improve the quality of referrals which will enable improved matching, promote increased placement stability and ultimately improve outcomes for children. Training continues to be offered to Authorities and Providers. Cardiff are currently receiving training for social workers.
3. **Framework Contract Management Toolkit.** This toolkit is supports Local Authority level contract management when using the Frameworks. It offers templates, explains reports and data intelligence that inform contract monitoring, there is guidance and best practice examples. A Health Check was completed for Cardiff in 2019 to identify areas for improvement. Discussions are underway to agree how 4Cs can offer Cardiff further support with monitoring.
4. **New Residential Framework Contracts Training & Support.** Regional and local training has been delivered to support effective use of the 2019 Framework from the outset. This has particularly focused on the key differences to the 2016 Frameworks and the introduction of a cost schedule approach rather than a maximum price approach. Training continues to be offered as the Framework expands. Additional requests for training on negotiation skills has led to an increase in the training sessions offered.
5. **Local Authority support with complex packages** remains a key feature of our individual Authority contract management support. Many Authorities continue to struggle with the interface with providers at point of contract award and exchange, with some placements starting before a contract is exchanged. This can lead to miscommunication and conflict which is escalated to 4C's for resolution. Often these placements are made at short notice or spot purchased. Supporting individual Authorities with children who are experiencing placement instability remains a key activity in the team.

## Evidencing Value for Money from 4C's Membership

With increasing budgetary pressures the team is aware of the need to fully evidence value for money from the consortium arrangement. Below is a summary of the main benefits of membership and the team support many ad hoc requests in addition to the below.

Contracting Benefits	Commissioning Benefits
Framework level contract management	Placement commissioning strategic support
Standardised contracts	Placement commissioning operational support
Standardised terms & conditions	Market shaping support at regional and local level
Contract monitoring visits at provider level	Market sounding exercises and consultations
Contract monitoring support and training at individual placement contract level	Data integrity reporting and support
Maintenance of provider registration and service compliance paperwork	Data analysis reporting and support
Quality performance assessment (QPA)	Young Commissioners Programme
Monitoring of Inspection reports with recommended actions for placing Authorities	Representation in national projects and forums
Issues, Concerns & Compliments process	Stakeholder engagement events
Escalation of Concerns process	Training, support and guidance on commissioning
Regional Matching Panels (IPM) for complex contracts	Internal service shaping support and advice
Development of bespoke specifications as required	Research and development projects
Procurement Benefits	Financial Benefits
Legally compliant frameworks	Maximum price modelling supressing average price
Innovative new flexible framework based on specialist legal and procurement advice of a blended approach to maximise benefits	Cost scheduling giving increased transparency of cost versus price to assist negotiation and audit
Legally compliant e-tendering system (framework and non-framework) with +200 providers	Long term placement discounts and parent and child discount at 12 weeks
Legally compliant mini competition process	Sibling placement discounts
Legally compliant provider evaluation to accredit to framework	Age range discounts
Transparent provider award process	Levy income
Frontline user system support and helpdesk	Support and training on negotiation
CCSR training and best practice guidance	Income to offset costs eg project management
Toolkit of non framework procurement	Economies of scale through regional personnel

## 4Cs and Cardiff – Support Priorities 2019/20

Recent priorities for 4Cs support specifically for Cardiff include:

1. Assistance with developing the Placement Commissioning Strategy
2. Assistance with developing the Market Position Statement
3. Series of jointly facilitated market engagement events
4. Health check report & recommendations for improvement
5. Bespoke care package support for children at the highest end of the continuum of need
6. Individual provider meeting support
7. Additional support for contract monitoring functions at local level.

If you require more information on 4Cs, please contact [4Cs@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:4Cs@rctcbc.gov.uk)