

# Pecyn Dogfen Gyhoeddus

Gareth Owens LL.B Barrister/Bargyfreithiwr

Chief Officer (Governance)

Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



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At:

Y Cynghorwyr: Mel Buckley, Teresa Carberry, Tina Claydon, Bill Crease, Carol Ellis, Gladys Healey, Andy Hughes, Fran Lister, Dave Mackie, Gina Maddison, Roz Mansell, Billy Mullin, Hilary McGuill, Ryan McKeown, Debbie Owen, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece, Jason Shallcross, Sam Swash a Arnold Woolley

**Aelodau Cyfetholedig:**

Lisa Allen, Lynn Bartlett a Wendy White

21 Mehefin 2024

Annwyl Gynghorydd

**RHYBUDD O GYFARFOD RHITHIOL**  
**CYD-BWYLLGOR TROSOLWIG A CHRAFFU ADDYSG, IEUENCTID A**  
**DIWYLLIANT A GOFAL CYMDEITHASOL AC IECHYD**  
**DYDD IAU, 27AIN MEHEFIN, 2024 AM 2.00 PM**

Yn gywir

Steven Goodrum

Rheolwr Gwasanaethau Democratiadd

Bydd y cyfarfod yn cael ei ffrydio'n fyw ar wefan y Cyngor. Bydd y ffrydio byw yn dod i ben pan fydd unrhyw eitemau cyfrinachol yn cael eu hystyried. Bydd recordiad o'r cyfarfod ar gael yn fuan ar ôl y cyfarfod ar <https://flintshire.publici.tv/core/portal/home>

Os oes gennych unrhyw ymholiadau, cysylltwch ag aelod o'r Tîm Gwasanaethau Democrataidd ar 01352 702345.

## R H A G L E N

### 1 PENODI CADEIRYDD

**Pwrpas:** I benodi Cadeirydd ar gyfer y cyfarfod.

### 2 YMDDIHEURIADAU

**Pwrpas:** I dderbyn unrhyw ymddiheuriadau.

### 3 DATGAN CYSYLLTIAD (GAN GYNNWYS DATGANIADAU CHWIPIO)

**Pwrpas:** I dderbyn unrhyw ddatganiad o gysylltiad a chynghori'r Aelodau yn unol a hynny.

### 4 DIOGELU YN Y MAES ADDYSG GAN GYNNWYS CYFRYNGAU CYMDEITHASOL A DIOGELWCH RHYNGRWYD (Tudalennau 5 - 14)

Adroddiad Prif Swyddog (Addysg ac Ieuenctid) - Aelod Cabinet Addysg, y Gymraeg a Diwylliant

**Pwrpas:** Rhoi'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf am gyflawni dyletswyddau diogelu statudol mewn ysgolion a'r portffolio Addysg. Cynnwys gwybodaeth ar Berthnasau ac Addysg Rywiol, a sut roedd hyn yn cyfrannu at leihau niwed.

### 5 GOFAL YN NES AT ADREF: STRATEGAETH COMISIYNU LLEOLIADAU AR GYFER PLANT SY'N DERBYN GOFAL. (Tudalennau 15 - 82)

Adroddiad Prif Swyddog (Addysg ac Ieuenctid) - Aelod Cabinet Addysg, y Gymraeg a Diwylliant

**Pwrpas:** Amlinellu canlyniad yr adolygiad ac effaith Polisi Lleol CsyFf.

### 6 DEDDF ANGHENION DYSGU YCHWANEGOL A'R TRIBIWNLYS ADDYSG (CYMRU) 2018 (Tudalennau 83 - 90)

Adroddiad Prif Swyddog (Addysg ac Ieuenctid) - Aelod Cabinet Addysg, y Gymraeg a Diwylliant

**Pwrpas:** Amlinellu'r dull o weithio tuag at nodi a chomisiynu addysg ar gyfer pobl ifanc Sir y Fflint a beth sy'n cael ei wneud i fodloni'r galw cynyddol am addysg arbenigol.

### 7 Y WYBODAETH DDIWEDDARAF YNGHYLCH URDDAS MISLIF (Tudalennau 91 - 96)

Adroddiad Prif Swyddog (Addysg ac Ieuenctid) - Aelod Cabinet Addysg, y Gymraeg a Diwylliant

**Pwrpas:** Darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf i Aelodau ar gefnogaeth y Cyngor ar gyfer Urddas Mislif.

**Sylwch, efallai y bydd egwyl o 10 munud os yw'r cyfarfod yn para'n hirach na dwy awr.**

# Eitem ar gyfer y Rhaglen 4



## JOINT EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday, 27th June 2024
<b>Report Subject</b>	Safeguarding in Education including Social Media and Internet Safety
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language and Culture
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer Education & Youth
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide elected members with an update on the discharge of statutory safeguarding duties in schools and the Education and Youth portfolio. The report also highlights the local authority approach to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and relevant updates for social media and internet safety provision.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members note the content of the Safeguarding in Education report and provide their feedback to officers on the strategies used by the Portfolio to effectively discharge its duties.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>Explaining the Safeguarding in Education report</b>
1.01	<b>Education and Youth Safeguarding Panel</b>  The Education and Youth (E&Y) Safeguarding Panel continues to meet each half term, chaired by the Chief Education Officer with representation from

	<p>School Improvement, Inclusion and Progression, Youth Justice, Youth Services and Social Services for Children.</p> <p>The panel ensures the Portfolio is operating effective management and assurance processes and drives continuous improvement in safeguarding, whilst maintaining a strategic overview of the department's responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.</p> <p>Key messages discussed at the Corporate Safeguarding Panel are cascaded to the E&amp;Y Safeguarding Panel and items are also escalated from the E&amp;Y Panel back up to Corporate Safeguarding panel to ensure consistent communication. Colleagues in E&amp;Y attend a wide range of different meetings which impact on safeguarding and the panel provides an opportunity to share relevant information and practice.</p> <p>A representative from Children's Services attends the E&amp;Y Safeguarding Panel and this supports two-way communication between portfolios. In addition, senior colleagues from Children's Services have also attended Headteacher Federation meetings at both primary and secondary level in the summer term 2023 and during the school year 23-24 to maintain open communication with our schools and work in partnership to improve services.</p>
1.02	<p><b>Annual Reporting and Self Evaluation</b></p> <p>All Flintshire schools are requested to submit annual safeguarding reports where they are required to evidence what training has been delivered; whether the relevant safeguarding policies and risk assessments have been reviewed and for the tracking of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) compliance. In addition, every 2 years there is a request for schools to complete the national Keeping Learners Safe Audit tool which is a self-evaluation of their safeguarding arrangements. This audit tool is intended to help schools identify strengths and weaknesses as well as checking whether the school has robust safeguarding policies and practices in place. By undergoing this process schools will have a benchmark against which to work to continually develop and improve.</p> <p>In reviewing this information, the local authority is able to fulfil its statutory obligation in regard to the monitoring of schools' compliance with the guidance.</p> <p>All Flintshire schools were asked to complete the audit tool, in addition to the Safeguarding Children Annual Report in spring term 2024. 69% of schools have returned the required documentation to date and those schools still outstanding are now being approached individually to follow up on the request. Findings from analysis of the reports will be shared with schools in the autumn term.</p> <p>Support is then prioritised; either on an individual school level or through a broader approach, including training or policy development or updates.</p>

1.03	<p><b>Professional Development – Safeguarding 2023-2024</b></p> <p><b>Autumn term 2023 - 8 courses (138 attendees)</b>  3 x level 2 courses  3 x level 3 Refresher courses  2 x level 3 Full course</p> <p><b>Spring term 2024 - 7 courses (106 attendees)</b>  3 x level 2 courses  2 x level 3 Refresher courses  2 x level 3 Full course</p> <p><b>Summer term 2024 - 9 courses (150 attendees)</b>  3 x level 2 courses  4 x level 3 Refresher courses  4 x level 3 Full course</p> <p>During the 23/24 academic year, a total of 394 staff have accessed Levels 2 and 3 safeguarding training from 24 courses. This is an increase in the number of courses delivered and number of attendees in comparison with previous years:</p> <p>2023/24 - 394 staff from 24 courses.  2022/23 - 371 staff from 23 courses.  2021/22 - 299 staff from 17 courses.  2020/21 - 262 staff from 15 courses.</p> <p>The level 2 and 3 courses (including refresher and full course for new safeguarding leads) continue to be delivered. The number of participants per course is still limited to 20 to ensure the quality of the delivery and maximise opportunities for engagement. Colleagues in Social Services continue to provide an incredibly valuable input into level 3 refresher courses and training for new safeguarding leads.</p>
1.04	<p><b>Prevent e-learning</b></p> <p>The Home Office Prevent e-learning modules have undergone a refresh in 2023. Training is tailored for all parts of the UK and different sectors including Education. Where this course was one online module in the past, this has now been divided into different courses:</p> <p>Course 1 – awareness course 30-40 min  Course 2 – Referrals course 30-40 min</p> <p>There is also a refresher course option 20-30min.</p> <p>We have advised schools that all staff (including governors) should complete course 1 when they are due to renew their existing training (required every 3 years). For those in roles that are required to make referrals/ senior roles, to complete courses 1 and 2. Schools maintain their own records of staff completing training and these are shared with the local authority in the annual safeguarding report.</p>

1.05	<p><b>National Safeguarding Training Standards</b></p> <p>Social Care Wales have developed the National Safeguarding training, learning and development <u>Framework</u> and also the National Safeguarding training, learning and development <u>Standards</u> which were launched in November 2022. The standards have been co-produced by a multi-agency national development group and were developed due to a lack of consistency in the design, content and provision of safeguarding training, learning and development across organisations in Wales and confusion around the appropriate levels of safeguarding training, learning and development for the workforce.</p> <p>With that in mind, the National Safeguarding training, learning and development Standards require organisations in Wales to incorporate the standards into their safeguarding policies and procedures and ensure practitioners understand their responsibilities relevant to the group they are in. This has been underway in the local authority already and during the last 12 months the current training offer for schools has been reviewed and mapped against the standards. The updated training offer will be effective from September 2024.</p>
1.06	<p>The term ‘Levels’ will now be referred to as ‘Groups’ and for each group there is specified criteria which must be incorporated into each agency’s training programme to ensure consistency in delivery. Each group will be expected to undertake the required number of hours training within a given period.</p> <p>For the Education sector specifically, staff fall into the following groups as determined in the Standards. Note the timeframe for refresher training differs between the National Standards and the Keeping Learners Safe Guidance. In Flintshire we will be adhering to the Keeping Learners Safe timeline.</p> <p><b>Group A: All staff or volunteers</b> (1-3 hours) Refreshed every 2 years in Keeping Learners Safe, 3 years National training standards.</p> <p>This is for everyone. They need to have a basic level of awareness of safeguarding and know how to report a concern.</p> <p><b>Group B: Teaching Assistants and Teachers</b> (minimum 6 hours) Refreshed every 2 years in Keeping Learners Safe, 3 years National training standards.</p> <p>This is for people who work directly with children and young people. They should have a higher knowledge of safeguarding, know who to talk to if they notice something is wrong and how to report a concern.</p> <p><b>Group C: Headteachers and Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)</b> (minimum 8 hours) every 3 years, Refreshed every 2 years in Keeping Learners Safe, 3 years National training standards.</p> <p>This is for people who work directly with children and young people and have particular safeguarding responsibilities. They need to be able to respond to safeguarding concerns.</p>

	<p><b>Group D: Education safeguarding lead for the local authority</b> (24 hours) Refreshed every 2-3 years</p> <p><b>Group E:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Group F: Directors of Education and School Governors</b> (minimum 6 hours) within 3 years</p>
1.07	<p><b>Secondary Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) Forum</b></p> <p>A Flintshire Secondary DSP Forum was established in October 2023 to ensure that a continuing dialogue exists to support the development of robust safeguarding arrangements in Flintshire secondary schools, and the effective implementation of the Welsh Government’s statutory safeguarding children in education guidance, Keeping Learners Safe. The terms of reference set out the purpose of the group and the proposed governance arrangements. The group is jointly chaired by a secondary school DSP and a Children’s Services Team Manager. It is our intention to establish an equivalent primary forum and advice has been sought through head teacher colleagues about the most effective means of establishing this for the next academic year.</p> <p>In order to support the review of the existing training offer and the implementation of the national training standards, a sub-group of the DSP Forum specifically focusing on training has been formed. The input in this group has shaped the planned training model and this will be consulted on with the wider DSP forum at the summer term meeting before being shared at the E&amp;Y Safeguarding panel and the Corporate Safeguarding panel. The new training programme and standards will be referenced in the updated schools’ model safeguarding policy which is issued annually every September.</p>
1.08	<p><b>Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Cluster model</b></p> <p>In the summer term 2023, members of the Healthy Schools team met with health and wellbeing / PSE leads from the secondary schools at the termly forum where they explored the benefit of working in clusters with their primary school colleagues focusing on RSE in 23-24. GwE has advocated working in school clusters to develop RSE and Health and Wellbeing in the curriculum as good practice and as such the approach is being adopted by other North Wales local authorities.</p> <p>The aim is to utilise the cluster approach for identifying and sharing effective practice and develop a plan with identified training needs which can be co-ordinated through the cluster model.</p> <p>In the summer term 2023 we worked with one secondary school and their cluster primary schools to support a meeting of their health and wellbeing leads. This was a pilot to establish how this model could work on a county wide basis with a focus on RSE.</p> <p>The Healthy Schools team organised an RSE Cluster afternoon at County Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 for primary school RSE leads to meet in their clusters with secondary RSE / H&amp;Wb lead. The focus of the meeting was to</p>

	<p>review how RSE was delivered in the first year of Curriculum for Wales and the implementation of the RSE code in order to identify future training and resource needs, support transition and planning for effective delivery of RSE. This event was attended by 58 staff from Flintshire schools and the team received really positive feedback on the day from both primary and secondary colleagues.</p> <p>Following this, each cluster were allocated funding of £3000 and were required to submit a proposal of how this could be utilised to develop RSE. This was a really useful exercise and enabled the schools to work collaboratively to best utilise the funding. Some clusters have continued to meet in person and others have maintained dialogue over email. The intention is for schools to build on this practice and a follow up event will be held in the autumn term 2024 to review how the funding has been utilised and what the outcomes are.</p>
1.09	<p><b>Further Professional Development opportunities – Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)</b></p> <p>Refresher training for the existing ‘Tyfu i Fyny’ / ‘Growing Up’ resources used by many primary schools was also delivered on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 attended by staff from 7 primary schools.</p> <p>Working with colleagues at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), funding of £1500 was accessed to support secondary schools with the RSE professional development training, equipping teaching staff with extensive, current, and comprehensive knowledge of the RSE code, delivered by a specialist provider.</p> <p><u>RSE Delivery in Practice Course (Brook)</u> 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 - 4 Secondary RSE leads attended.</p> <p><u>Sexual Health in the Community Course (Brook)</u> 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 - 3 Secondary RSE leads attended.</p> <p><u>Supporting and including LGBTQ+ Young People (Brook)</u> 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024 - 6 Secondary schools attended.</p>
1.10	<p><b>Online Safety Act (Bill)</b></p> <p>The Online Safety Bill received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023 becoming an Act of Parliament (law). The Online Safety Bill delivers the UK government’s manifesto commitment to make the UK the safest place to be online, while defending free expression. The UK government has continued to consult with stakeholders since introducing the Bill into Parliament and as a result, a number of policy changes have been made.</p> <p>The Digital Resilience in Education Team in Welsh Government have contributed to a series of consultations led by Ofcom concerning the emerging guidance to support the regulation of the Bill.</p>
1.11	<p><b>Web Scraping Risks and Social Media Guidance for Schools</b></p>



	<p>Web scraping is described as the automated extraction of mass content from websites and open/public social media accounts.</p> <p>While it is understandable that schools will want to share moments they are proud of, it is critical to understand that any image or video content shared on a social media platform set to open/public can be accessed by anyone.</p> <p>The Digital Resilience Team in Welsh Government have advised this year that schools should exercise great caution sharing images or videos of learners publicly due to the potential risk of the content being misused. Social media platforms, as with any website, can be vulnerable to web scraping which facilitates any public content to be collected at scale. Web scraping poses risks when it comes to sharing images of learners. Here are some key points to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unauthorised sharing: Without proper safeguards, images posted on school websites or social media platforms can be scraped and shared outside the intended audience. This could lead to unintended consequences, including misuse or modification of images.</li> <li>• Privacy concerns: Images may contain personal information and could be used in ways that individuals did not expect, potentially compromising their privacy and disempowering learners from how their data and identity is used.</li> <li>• Potential misuse: Images can be manipulated or misused out of context, creating risks for learners. Identifying learners through images can make them vulnerable.</li> </ul>
1.12	<p>There is Welsh Government guidance available to support schools and settings with their approach to using social media safely: 'Practices and principles for schools use of social media'. This is designed to help schools navigate the complex landscape of social media, the practices and principles outlined in the guidance can support schools to ensure that their use of social media is safe, responsible and effective.</p> <p>Schools have also been directed to a training video summarising how the guidance can help with developing a social media strategy, outlining current trends in the online behaviour of children and young people and highlighting where to find further sources of support through the Keeping Safe online area of Hwb.</p> <p>To raise awareness of responsible image sharing to ensure the safeguarding of learners across Flintshire, schools have been advised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review existing practices: Schools should assess their current image-sharing practices in line with the Welsh Government's social media guidance.</li> <li>• Awareness raising: Raise awareness among all school staff about the importance of responsible image sharing, the school policy on social media and highlight the risks of digital scraping. Schools may also wish</li> </ul>

	to highlight the importance of responsible image sharing with parents and carers.
1.13	<p><b>360° Safe Cymru Tool</b></p> <p>The 360° Safe Cymru Tool is hosted on the national learning platform, Hwb, and allows schools to self-assess their online safety provision. We continue to encourage schools to use the 360 safe Cymru online safety review tool.</p> <p>The tool is used by over 1,400 schools in Wales and provides schools with a structured self-review process to assess and improve their online safety policies and provision. The tool is funded by the Welsh Government to support online safety.</p> <p>98% of schools in Wales have registered to use the tool and of those 70% have assigned a score to all 21 aspects of the tool. However, only 23% of schools have logged in and updated their assessment in the last 12 months.</p> <p>The Digital Resilience Team regularly run communications campaigns to encourage schools to access and use the tool and to promote the support it offers. The tool is regularly updated (last update March 2024) to ensure the content reflects current practices and keeps pace with online safety developments. Schools do not need to complete the full self-assessment in one session, the process can be spread through the school year.</p> <p>Schools' engagement is monitored at a local authority level and supported as required. It is not a statutory requirement for schools to use this tool.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	Safeguarding is a core responsibility of everybody who works for the Council. Delivering the commitments contained within this report are within existing human and financial resources.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
	<p>The risk for the local authority is the potential to breach of statutory legislation related to safeguarding and the wellbeing of children. This includes the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. There is also potential for reputational damage and negative press coverage if there are significant breaches of policy involving learners or Flintshire employees in relation to internet and/or social media activity and findings from Estyn Inspections.</p> <p>This risk is mitigated by the Council having named officers with specific responsibilities for safeguarding in schools. The Council also provides firewall and web filtering services to schools via a service level agreement. A rolling safeguarding training programme for head teachers / designated safeguarding leads is in place. The dissemination of relevant information to</p>

	<p>schools is undertaken, alongside the monitoring of self-evaluations and annual reporting by schools on the implementation of relevant policies.</p> <p>The Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>There will continue to be ongoing monitoring of the portfolio and schools in discharging of statutory safeguarding duties</p>
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<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	None required for this report.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	There are no supporting documents for this report.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>National Safeguarding training, learning and development Framework.  <a href="https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/safeguarding-list/national-safeguarding-training-learning-and-development-framework">https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/safeguarding-list/national-safeguarding-training-learning-and-development-framework</a></p> <p>National Safeguarding training, learning and development Standards.  <a href="https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/safeguarding-list/national-safeguarding-training-learning-and-development-standards">https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/safeguarding-list/national-safeguarding-training-learning-and-development-standards</a></p> <p>National Training Standards Frequently Asked Questions  <a href="https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/safeguarding-list/national-safeguarding-training-learning-and-development-standards/safeguarding-standards-faqs">https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/safeguarding-list/national-safeguarding-training-learning-and-development-standards/safeguarding-standards-faqs</a></p> <p>Home Office prevent training modules:  <a href="https://www.support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal">https://www.support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal</a></p> <p>Hwb: Social Media training for schools  <a href="https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/55f6b31d-8dac-4bb3-82c2-236c2bfd35c/overview">https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/55f6b31d-8dac-4bb3-82c2-236c2bfd35c/overview</a></p> <p>Hwb: Practices and principles for schools' use of social media</p>

	<p><a href="https://hwb.gov.wales/keeping-safe-online/welsh-government-guidance/practices-and-principles-for-schools-use-of-social-media/">https://hwb.gov.wales/keeping-safe-online/welsh-government-guidance/practices-and-principles-for-schools-use-of-social-media/</a></p> <p>360 Safe Cymru  <a href="https://hwb.gov.wales/360safe">360 safe Cymru - Hwb (gov.wales)</a></p>
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<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704019  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk">vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Claire Sinnott, Learning Advisor – Health, Wellbeing &amp; Safeguarding  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704054  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Claire.h.sinnott@flintshire.gov.uk">Claire.h.sinnott@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
8.01	<p><b>Safeguarding</b> - safeguarding means preventing and protecting children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers.</p> <p><b>DSP</b> – Designated Safeguarding Person. The role of the DSP is to take lead responsibility for managing child protection issues and cases. This involves providing advice and support to other staff, making referrals to and liaising with the local authority and working with other agencies.</p> <p><b>RSE</b> - Relationships and Sexuality Education. Relationships and Sexuality Education is part of the Curriculum for Wales and all schools in Wales must teach RSE from September 2022 on a phased basis.</p>

# Eitem ar gyfer y Rhaglen 5



## JOINT EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Report Subject</b>	Care Closer to Home: Placement Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer: Social Services
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Flintshire County Council has a strategic vision to provide sufficient local good quality accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children. Our 'Care Closer to Home: Placement Commissioning Strategy' sets out our intention to invest in the development of in house fostering, residential care and to forge effective partnerships with high quality providers that operate not for profit principles. This approach is consistent with Welsh Government's commitment to:

- eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children
- grow the Foster Wales public sector fostering brand

This report confirms progress in delivering the first phase of our 'Care Closer to Home' strategy and proposes our approach to updating the 'Care Closer to Home' Strategy within the context of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill that was laid before the Senedd Cymru on 20 May 2024.

The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill contains eliminating profit provisions which will restrict the making of profit in the provision of care home services provided wholly or mainly to children, secure accommodation services, and fostering services. This will necessitate local authorities to upscale internal provision to meet demand and sustained collaborative working with existing and new 'not for profit' providers as the landscape for supporting looked after children in Wales changes.

The report proposes a workshop for Elected Members to outline the new legislation, the context of current placement commissioning (often referred to as Out of County Placements) and to explore options for developing our strategic approach for placement commissioning and further development of in-house placement provision. The outcome will inform the development of an updated phase 2 'Care Closer to Home' Strategy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The report seeks scrutiny of progress to in delivering phase one of our 'Care Closer to Home' strategy.
2	A workshop for Elected Members is held in September/ October 2024 to outline the new legislation, the context of current placement commissioning (often referred to as Out of County Placements) and to explore options for developing our strategic approach for placement commissioning and further development of in-house placement provision.

## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>The National Context</b>
1.01	The Welsh Government's Programme for Government contains a number of commitments relating to a new vision for Children's Social Care. At its heart, Welsh Government wants to see fewer children and young people entering care. For those children in care, the ambition is for them to remain close to home so they can continue to be part of their community and for their stay in care to be as short as possible, consistent with meeting the needs of the young person.
1.02	The Programme for Government contains a commitment to eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children. Welsh Government is of the view that it is not right that some private companies who run services for looked after children can make significant profits from the children they care for. Eliminating profit from care is about transitioning to a not-for-profit model of care in Wales, focussing on values and not finances. It is about fundamentally changing how we care for children and their families as part of a network of local, community based services that have the welfare of the young person as the absolute priority. The aim is to ensure that public money invested in accommodation for care experienced children is not extracted as profit, but instead is reinvested back into the system to support better outcomes, services and professional development.
1.03	On 20 May 2024 the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill was laid before the Senedd Cymru. The intention is for the relevant provisions of the Bill to be brought into effect so that independent providers of children's homes and fostering agencies must be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as a 'not for profit entity'. Under the Bill no new for-profit provider would be able to register with CIW after April 2026. All current providers would have to move to a not-for-profit position by April 2027.
1.04	A not-for-profit entity will be defined as:  (a) a charitable company limited by guarantee without a share capital, (b) a charitable incorporated organisation, (c) a charitable registered society, or

	(d) a community interest company limited by guarantee without a share capital
1.05	<p>These models all satisfy the principle there must be no payment of dividends to shareholders or members and that the trading surpluses should be reinvested into the service (including building appropriate reserves and capital expenditure). A not-for-profit entity will also be required to have objects or purposes that primarily relate to the welfare of children or such other public good as the Welsh Ministers determine.</p> <p>In order to ensure the policy is not undermined by practices which go against its spirit and intention, thus defeating the purpose of the legislative changes, the Bill will also provide that unreasonable or inappropriate payments made by a not-for-profit entity can be taken into account by Welsh Ministers when deciding if a provider is a fit and proper person to be registered.</p>
1.06	<p>In order to mitigate disruption to the lives of children in existing residential and foster care placements, transitional arrangements will allow a registered for-profit provider of a restricted children's service (a legacy provider) to continue operating after the provisions have come into force, subject to conditions imposed by regulations. Welsh Ministers will have a power, exercised through regulations, to bring the registration of legacy providers to an end at an appropriate time.</p>
1.07	<p>A national Programme Board has been established to take forward the implementation of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill with workstreams and associated task and finish groups. Flintshire are an active member of the 'local authority' workstream.</p>
1.08	<p>The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill will fetter our ability to commission freely with providers of certain business models outside of Wales as well as in country and locally. This policy will, and is already, changing the landscape of placement options for our children and young people, therefore, local authorities must proactively identify opportunities for change and manage the emerging risks. The Council is committed to the national policy intent. The implementation timeline is, however, very challenging and will necessitate significant planning to transition safely for our children and young people.</p>
1.09	<p>Funding has been made available to local authorities to support the development of in house fostering and residential care. Locally this funding has been used to support the delivery of phase one of our care Closer to Home Strategy and will contribute to phase two. However, it is clear local authorities will require significant investment to underpin this ambitious generational change management programme. Ensuring the allocation of sufficient funding for this programme is set within the context of extreme budgetary pressures across local government.</p>
1.10	<b>The local context</b>
1.11	<p>It is an explicit expectation of national policy that local authorities upscale their internal service provision to rebalance and reduce reliance on externally commissioned services. Flintshire's 'Care Closer to Home' strategy sets our ambition to develop high quality services, in a sustainable</p>

	<p>way, whilst recognising that we will still commission externally where there is lack of sufficiency or where the best interests of our children looked after require an alternative model of care to best meet their needs.</p>
1.12	<p>The Care Closer to Home Strategy was developed to respond to specific challenges in commissioning placements and has been updated to reflect current and, anticipated, service needs. These can be summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in foster care provision particularly in relation to support for older children, sibling groups, and parent and child placements</li> <li>• Gaps in local residential care include placements for teenagers who often have complex needs, underlying trauma, and can show behaviours of concern</li> <li>• The need for independent supported living for young people and care leavers aged 16-25. Placement options for children 16+ are extremely limited and can necessitate bespoke arrangements that operate without registration</li> <li>• The need for immediate placements for young people who have been remanded to local authority accommodation</li> <li>• Sufficient placements for disabled children as part of a wider support and respite package</li> <li>• Sourcing residential placements that provide appropriate specialist provision to meet educational needs</li> <li>• Significant workforce recruitment and retention pressures which can impede the scale and pace of in-house residential expansion</li> </ul>
1.13	<p>The introduction of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill will require the local authority to refresh and update our Care Closer to Home Placement Commissioning Strategy to consider the impact of what will be a fundamental shift, from an open market to a restricted market. As part of this work it is proposed that in September / October 2024 we hold a focused workshop for Elected Members to outline the new legislation, the context of current placement commissioning (often referred to as Out of County Placements) and to explore options for developing our strategic approach for placement commissioning and further development of in-house placement provision. The outcome will inform the development of an updated phase 2 'Care Closer to Home' Strategy.</p>
1.14	<p><b>Care Closer to Home – Phase One delivery</b></p> <p>The Care Closer to Home strategy sets our ambition to expand local authority fostering and residential care placements. Progress in year one is summarised below.</p>
1.15	<p><b>Fostering</b></p> <p>Our priority is that our internal capacity and range of fostering services will grow significantly to rebalance our reliance on external commissioning. We will offer children looked after families who will care for them well, allowing them to feel loved, with a sense of belonging.</p>



1.16	<p>The current foster carer profile is that as of the 31st of March 2024 we have 98 Foster Carers in total which consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36 Connected Persons Foster Carers Approved. (with 5 being assessed).</li> <li>• 45 General Foster Carers (2 being assessed)</li> <li>• 17 Respite and Emergency Foster Carers (1 being assessed)</li> </ul> <p>This is an increase from 88 Foster Carers as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.</p> <p>However, we know that placement demand exceeds placement capacity. Our data forecasting identifies that to be self-sufficient we would need to recruit 59 foster carers over the next 3 years within a highly competitive market with finite foster carers.</p>
1.17	<p>To support the development of Foster Care in Flintshire we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) recruit more fosters carers with a particular focus on supporting children aged 10-15 and parent and expanding child placements</li> <li>b) continuing to grow and develop our Special Guardian offer</li> <li>c) expanding our Foster Bear initiative</li> <li>d) work with quality providers that are seeking to transition to not for profit models to maximise local placement stability and choice</li> <li>e) work with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector providers to identify how we can work in partnership to support children with specific needs locally</li> </ol>
1.18	<p>Flintshire is proud to be part of the local authority Maethu Cymru: Foster Wales family. Maethu Cymru is a collaborative network of fostering services from all 22 Local Authorities across Wales. At a national level, Maethu Cymru aims to build the presence and processes that will help all Local Authorities recruit more foster carers.</p>
1.19	<p>The Maethu Cymru approach brings together national, regional and local resources to enhance our capacity and expertise to recruit and support local authority foster carers. The approach is supported through strong regional working. In North Wales we have created an integrated regional approach which compliments local expertise. Across the region the number of people making enquiries about becoming a foster carer has reduced and we have therefore focused on increasing interest and improving the quality of enquiries. To achieve this, we worked with specialist marketing and digital agencies to develop integrated marketing campaigns and digital media plans for the North Wales region.</p>
1.20	<p>Welsh Government grant funding has been provided to support enhanced marketing and recruitment activity within local authorities. In November 2023 we were able to use this grant funding to enhance workforce capacity to support our marketing and recruitment work to increase the number of general foster carers aligned to service need.</p>
1.21	<p>An area of significant growth for the Fostering team is work to relating to connected persons. Connected persons are a relative, friend or another person connected with a child who are assessed and approved by the local</p>

	authority as a foster carer for the child/ren. Connected persons carers are provided full parity with our general foster carers.
1.22	Positively, there has been a continued increase in the number approved of connected persons, who now make up 40% of approved foster carers in Flintshire. The number of viability assessments for connected persons has to be met with existing resources and can impact on our capacity to recruit and assess general foster carers. The increase in connected person has also necessitated our Special Guardianship work to grow and expand to meet the increasing demand.
1.23	<b>Special Guardianship</b>
1.24	Special Guardianship is an order made by the Family Court that places a child or young person to live with someone other than their parent(s) on a long-term basis. The person(s) with whom a child is placed will become the child's Special Guardian.
1.25	The support provided through Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) has continued to grow and develop, with 11 SGO's granted last financial year. A dedicated SGO support service has been implemented with an inbox to direct support needs for a more streamlined response.
1.26	The service developed a bilingual website which provides in-depth information and a contact form for any queries. The service is involved in discussions about Special Guardianship from the outset of the Local Authority's involvement with children and families, identifying whether Special Guardianship is appropriate prior to the child(ren) becoming "looked after".
1.27	We have developed a bi-lingual fact sheet which embeds the information we provide to families. The service has 2 full-time social workers who undertake assessments and a Childrens Services Assistant who provides support to the families in the following 12 months. The support has proved helpful, with several minor issues being resolved quickly.
1.24	The SGO service provides information and support to Special Guardian's with a Newsletter developed twice a year providing information about upcoming training events, contact details for the team and literature/ articles of importance. The finance team maintain annual contact with Special Guardian's to ensure accurate financial support to families. Dedicated coffee mornings or support groups have been considered however feedback to date is that this would not be utilised, this offer will be kept under review.
1.28	The Team are developing relationships with other agencies and neighbouring Local Authorities for the support needs of families who reside outside Flintshire. Social workers attend bi-monthly Special Interest Groups and are actively involved in the development of Special Guardianship support in Wales.

1.29	<p><b>Foster Bear</b></p> <p>Flintshire have developed and launched an innovative approach to raise awareness, educate and recruit foster carers through Foster Bear.</p>
1.30	<p>The aim of the Foster Bear campaign is to raise awareness of local authority fostering and outline the urgency to recruit more foster carers in Flintshire. The initiative involves strong partnership working with schools to introduce the concept of being looked after and the important role of fostering is supporting children and young people.</p>
1.31	<p>Working with Education, lesson plans have been developed to introduce foster bear and children are given the opportunity to take Foster Bear home for a weekend during which they will look after and care for the bear. The children also receive a Foster Bear Booklet full of fun activities for them to complete in class and in which to record their weekend adventures.</p>
1.32	<p>Children's families have the opportunity to participate in the campaign by sharing photographs and stories on social media to show how Foster Bear has experienced life in their family, using the hashtag <b>#fosterbear</b>.</p>
1.33	<p>To date we have worked with 13 primary schools on our foster bear initiative. This has led to 1 family becoming approved foster carers, another case in the final stages of determination and a 3<sup>rd</sup> family have recently expressed an interest. The initiative is having the dual outcome of raising awareness and understanding about being looked after as well as reaching out to potential foster carers in our local communities.</p>
1.34	<p><b>Working with fostering providers to meet local need</b></p>
1.35	<p>Our assessment is that 3<sup>rd</sup> sector fostering services and those who plan to move to 'not for profit' models will remain part of strategy to provide high quality placements for Flintshire looked after children. Over the next 12 months we will develop initial tentative conversations with Providers about their intentions, within the context of the eliminating profit agenda. These will explore where there may be opportunities to work collaboratively, including where we may need specialist services.</p>
1.36	<p><b>Priority for Residential Care</b></p>
1.37	<p>The priority area for all young people who need residential care is that they are looked after, close to home, in high quality settings where they can thrive, and that they are looked after by a stable, resilient, skillful and well supported staff group of carers.</p>
1.38	<p>As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 35 children supported in commissioned residential care and 7 supported through in-house provision. During 2023/2024 we have seen an overall increase in the number of independent residential care homes operating in Flintshire but a continued shortage of residential care homes that:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deliver models of care targeted at the needs of children and young people at the highest end of the continuum of need, with undiagnosed learning disabilities, neurodiversity, complex trauma and mental health needs,</li> <li>• offer integrated health, education and social care packages, delivered through evidence-based models of care,</li> <li>• take emergency same day admissions,</li> <li>• are resilient to physical violence and aggression, high levels of property damage, frequent absconding linked to criminalisation and/or exploitation and self-harm.</li> </ul>
1.39	<p>It is clear that we need to align need and provision. Our priorities are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) develop clear expansion plans for in house residential care and the associated therapeutic model</li> <li>ii) work with local providers who wish to move to not for profit models and seek opportunities for maximising placement choice for Flintshire children</li> <li>iii) develop the workforce to ensure sufficient numbers of well trained and supported staff</li> </ul>
1.40	<b>Expanding in house residential care</b>
1.41	<p>In 2023/2024 we have registered and opened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tŷ Nyth – a home supporting family reunification</li> <li>• Y Dderwen – a home providing long term placements</li> <li>• 2 Small Group Home – providing bespoke solo placements for children with complex needs</li> </ul>
1.42	This is in addition to the 2 long terms beds that we developed as part of our support at Arosfa Residential Home for children with disabilities.
1.43	We also have Mesen Fach which has been developed as an emergency placements and we are in the process of recruiting the workforce to enable us to move forward with our registration application to CIW.
1.44	Currently we have 7 looked after children supported through our in House provision and our ambition is to expand our capacity. This will require integrated work with Health to ensure we develop an appropriate therapeutic model that will meet the support needs of children in the new developments. We will also work with Education to ensure that the pathways for accessing locally based education and training is fully developed.
1.45	<b>Working with local Providers</b>
1.46	<p>There are four steps we will be taking to inform our expansion programme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forecast the number of children requiring residential care in the next 3 to 5 years through our Care Closer to Home Placement Strategy</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Quantify the anticipated capacity within current local authority provision over this timeline</li> <li>3. Engage with Providers to ascertain who will move to a not for profit model, or who will cease operation, and the associated impact for our looked after children, taking account of any transitional and 'best interest' exemptions that are made by Welsh Government for children already placed.</li> <li>4. Deduct 2 &amp; 3 from 1 to ascertain the number of children who will not have provision as the priority cohort for developing services to meet their needs.</li> </ol>
1.47	Initial need analysis suggests that the expansion model will need to centre on provision where children with challenging needs are admitted into solo / small group home services, stabilised through support and then moved on to a long term placement with other children. However, we need to have the opportunity to review the content of the Social Care Bill, which has not yet been shared, and work with Providers to understand the impact on the market to inform our gap analysis and service development plans.
1.48	<b>Workforce recruitment and development</b>
1.49	Strong, value based leadership is integral to ensuring a compassionate, high quality and nurturing culture with Children's residential care. We have invested in recruiting, and developing, a management team to lead our service development in an area of service provision that is new to the local authority.
1.50	We have successfully recruited a specific Responsible Individual (RI) for Children's Services who leads our residential service and will oversee any further expansion of provision. They are leading a proactive workforce recruitment and development strategy to ensure that we have workforce sufficiency to meet CIW registration requirements.
1.51	Workforce pressures across social care and health services are well versed. Ensuring our workforce is sufficient, receive the right training and have the right skills to provide our children with the best care and support is a key issue for us. This includes foster carers and residential care staff.
1.52	We recognise that for some of our children and young people with the most complex blend of needs and presenting behaviours, models of care with high fidelity delivery models are required. Resilience across workforce to presenting behaviours is crucial to placement stability. During 2022/23 Flintshire have had to manage more young people displaying high levels of dysregulated behaviour. We are working hard to build resilience through training and support and mitigating risk of placement disruption. We have a comprehensive training offer for foster carers and have invested significant resource to upskill residential care staff in trauma informed care recovery models.
1.53	Maintaining and improving quality of service, alongside our rapid expansion of service offer will require a sustained and consistent focus on workforce recruitment and development to build the skills and knowledge of existing workforce and new recruits/carers.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>												
2.01	<p>A combination of Welsh Government grant programmes and financial investment through the Council's Medium Term Financial (MTF) Plan are being used to fund the development of the Residential Homes. The following funding was allocated from Welsh Government:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial Year</th> <th>Eliminate Grant allocation</th> <th>Radical Reform Grant allocation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>£350,000.00</td> <td>£85,877.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023/24</td> <td>£501,212.00</td> <td>£85,878.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>£561,000.00</td> <td>£85,878.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Financial Year	Eliminate Grant allocation	Radical Reform Grant allocation	2022/23	£350,000.00	£85,877.50	2023/24	£501,212.00	£85,878.00	2024/25	£561,000.00	£85,878.00
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2.02	<p>All allocation of £1m has been identified for further expansion of residential care through the local authority's Capital funding. However, we will require significant additional capital and revenue support from Welsh Government if we are to realise the scale of the rebalancing of care envisaged through their Programme for Government. We await clarity and confirmation of further funding streams beyond the current national 3 year programme which ends in 2024/2025. Any expansion plans will be informed by available funding and resources.</p>												

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	<p>The development of additional in-house residential provision will require significant funding and workforce recruitment and staff development. Further Welsh Government funding will be critical to support the further development of in-house residential care.</p>
3/02	<p>Recruitment within the social care sector is challenging and we must maintain minimum staffing ratios linked to care plans and statement of purpose, ensuring staff have the skills, training and support to deliver quality of care. We are taking an innovative approach towards both recruitment and retention will be necessary in a competitive employment market. This will include recruiting for 'values', funding intensive training on therapeutic models for support, investment in senior residential roles to provide visible and accessible role modelling with each provision and a programme of leadership development and coaching for managers.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	<p>The North Wales Population Needs Assessment (April 2022) collated stakeholder feedback relating to children's services and service providers.</p>
4.02	<p>Proposals for residential expansion will be shared at an early point with Young Voices Out Loud Group, which consists of young people who are looked after as well as care leavers, to look at the options and seek their expertise on what young people would want.</p>

4.03	We have held 3 workshops with local residential care providers to commence the discussions about the implications of the eliminating profit agenda and their emerging intentions to help with constructive market assessment. Providers are eager to understand the detail of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill to enable them to assess the implications for their operating model and to inform their intentions as to whether they move to a not-for-profit entity, focus on provision under a specific exemption, or exit the market. Once we have a clearer picture of the future of the local market we can form our strategic developments to meet known market gaps.
4.04	It proposed that we hold a workshop for Elected Members to outline the new legislation, the context of current placement commissioning (often referred to as Out of County Placements) and to explore options for developing our strategic approach for placement commissioning and further development of in-house placement provision. This will be a joint Education and Social Services workshop. The outcome will inform the development of an updated phase 2 'Care Closer to Home' Strategy.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	App 1 - Flintshire County Council Care Closer to Home Strategy

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill Explanatory Memorandum <a href="https://senedd.wales/media/xiwnjbgf/pri-ld16500-em-e.pdf">https://senedd.wales/media/xiwnjbgf/pri-ld16500-em-e.pdf</a>
6.02	Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill <a href="https://senedd.wales/media/c2cpcwp4/pri-ld16500-e.pdf">https://senedd.wales/media/c2cpcwp4/pri-ld16500-e.pdf</a>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<b>Contact Officer:</b> Craig Macleod, Senior Manager: Children <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 701313 <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:craig.macleod@flintshire.gov.uk">craig.macleod@flintshire.gov.uk</a>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
	<p><b>The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA):</b> The Act became law on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and provides the statutory framework for the regulation and inspection of social care in Wales.</p> <p><b>Responsible Individual (RI):</b> The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 requires providers to designate a Responsible Individual (RI) for each place at, from or in relation to which a regulated service is provided as part of the registration process.</p>

<p><b>Regional Integrated Fund:</b> The Health &amp; Social Care Regional Integration Fund is a five year fund from April 2022-March 2027. The fund is intended to enable integration of health and social care services.</p>
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<p><b>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) :</b> A strategy that provides a financial framework within which financial stability can be achieved and sustained in the medium term to deliver the Council's key strategic outcomes, priorities and sustainable services.</p>
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# Care Closer to Home Placement Commissioning Strategy

## Care Closer to Home Flintshire County Council's Placement Commissioning Strategy

From 2022 to 2025  
(Version\_6)

23/6/2022



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

## Section 1: The Background & Context

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Social Care and Policy Context

## Section 2: The Data, Facts & Feedback

- Looked After Children Data and Trends
- Placements Profile
- Current Placement Provision
- Outcomes of Stakeholders Consultation

## Section 3: The Analysis, Gaps & Options

- Projection of our Future Needs
- Financial Analysis
- Gap Analysis
- Options for Future Provision

## Section 4: The Decisions, Planning & Strategy

- Commissioning Intentions
- Action Plans for Implementation

**This is the initial Strategy outlining our strategic ambition. The Strategy has been written within a tight time frame and will be a live document subject to further work in consultation with the 4C's, North Wales Regional Commissioning Board and local review.**

# SECTION 1

## 1. Executive Summary

This strategy details Flintshire County Council’s intentions to deliver safe, high quality, supportive placements that support children and young people to develop the skills and resilience to lead fulfilled lives.

The strategy is set out in 4 sections. The following table provides a summary of the main themes within each section:

	Executive Summary
Section 1 The Background and Context	Our ambition is to ensure every child has a safe, stable and loving home. Our main aim is to support families to safely care for their own children. However, we recognise that family and friends may not always be appropriate carers. This Strategy: i) sets out the actions we will take over the next 3 years to enable more children to live closer to home and ii) outlines the resources that we need to deliver this ambitious programme.
Section 2 The Data, Facts & Feedback	As of March 2022: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 248 children looked after in Flintshire</li> <li>• There are 38 children placed with independent foster carers</li> <li>• There are 2 children placed with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector foster carers</li> <li>• There are 34 children placed in independent residential care</li> <li>• There are 7 children in supported accommodation</li> <li>• Flintshire's comparative rate of children looked after is below the Wales average figure</li> <li>• The majority of children in care are aged between 5-15</li> <li>• 83% live with their parents or foster carers or kinship carers</li> <li>• 60% of looked after children live in placements in Flintshire</li> <li>• 23% live outside Flintshire but in Wales</li> <li>• Over the previous 3 years, an average of 94 children were placed into foster care. With 27%, 34% and 20% placed with external fostering providers</li> <li>• National benchmark for external foster placement utilisation is 23%</li> </ul>
Section 3 The Analysis, Gaps & Options	Foster care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in foster care provision include support for older children, sibling groups, and parent and child placements</li> <li>• Our data forecasting identifies that we need to recruit 59 foster carers over the next 3 years within a highly competitive market with finite foster carers</li> <li>• Realistically demand will need to be met through in house expansion and new innovative partnerships</li> </ul> Residential care

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaps in local residential care include placements for teenagers who often have complex needs, underlying trauma, and can show behaviours of concern</li> <li>• Placement options for children 16+ are extremely limited and can necessitate bespoke arrangements that operate outside of RISCA registration</li> <li>• We have some excellent Providers, with specialist skills and resources, and clear values and principles that place children at the heart of their work</li> <li>• There are significant workforce recruitment and retention pressures</li> </ul>						
<p>Section 4 The Decisions, Planning &amp; Strategy</p>	<p>Flintshire’s strategic commitments are to:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Expand</b></td> <td> <p>Targeted Intensive Family Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ further investing in Family Group Conferencing</li> <li>➤ commissioning parent advocacy</li> <li>➤ working with Health and Education to provide targeted support for children and families with neuro diversity</li> </ul> <p>Maethu Flintshire / Foster Flintshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ recruiting more foster carers</li> <li>➤ creating an additional Mockingbird Hub</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Build</b></td> <td> <p>In house residential care including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ an assessment and support home with MST therapy</li> <li>➤ 4 bedroom Homes providing permanent homes</li> <li>➤ a crisis flat</li> <li>➤ small group Homes supporting 1 or 2 children</li> <li>➤ provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking children</li> <li>➤ independent supported living for 16/17 year olds</li> </ul> <p>Our workforce capacity and skills including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ social work capacity to assess and support more foster carers</li> <li>➤ recruiting a Children’s RI, Registered Managers, Deputy Managers and Therapists</li> <li>➤ recruiting and developing residential care staff</li> <li>➤ providing training on DBT and PBS</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Embrace</b></td> <td> <p>Work with high quality Providers who deliver positive outcomes and are committed to the values and principles of ‘not for profit’. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- developing a partnership approach to specialist, therapeutic fostering</li> <li>- working with local quality providers who have specialist expertise and resources</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<b>Expand</b>	<p>Targeted Intensive Family Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ further investing in Family Group Conferencing</li> <li>➤ commissioning parent advocacy</li> <li>➤ working with Health and Education to provide targeted support for children and families with neuro diversity</li> </ul> <p>Maethu Flintshire / Foster Flintshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ recruiting more foster carers</li> <li>➤ creating an additional Mockingbird Hub</li> </ul>	<b>Build</b>	<p>In house residential care including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ an assessment and support home with MST therapy</li> <li>➤ 4 bedroom Homes providing permanent homes</li> <li>➤ a crisis flat</li> <li>➤ small group Homes supporting 1 or 2 children</li> <li>➤ provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking children</li> <li>➤ independent supported living for 16/17 year olds</li> </ul> <p>Our workforce capacity and skills including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ social work capacity to assess and support more foster carers</li> <li>➤ recruiting a Children’s RI, Registered Managers, Deputy Managers and Therapists</li> <li>➤ recruiting and developing residential care staff</li> <li>➤ providing training on DBT and PBS</li> </ul>	<b>Embrace</b>	<p>Work with high quality Providers who deliver positive outcomes and are committed to the values and principles of ‘not for profit’. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- developing a partnership approach to specialist, therapeutic fostering</li> <li>- working with local quality providers who have specialist expertise and resources</li> </ul>
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## **Eliminating Profit from Care**

This Strategy has been produced within the context of Welsh Government's commitment to *'eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children during the next Senedd term.'* This commitment is about rebalancing the market so that the duties on local authorities in relation to looked after children are not contracted out to for-profit companies and remain with public sector or not-for-profit providers.

The intention of this commitment is to remove all private profit from the care of children in relation to children's care homes, foster care, supported accommodation for young people up to the age of 25 and specialist care at home for children including disabled children. An important element of this work is a strong focus on ensuring children are cared for and supported closer to their communities.

## **Delivering this Strategy**

There are currently 38 children placed with independent foster carers and an additional 2 children placed with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector foster carers. There are also 39 looked after children supported in residential care. Rebalancing the children's care market within Flintshire in accordance with the stated aims of Welsh Government to eliminate profit will necessitate significant investment in support across from children on the 'edge of care', foster care and residential care.

Our analysis is that to rebalance the market over the next 3 years we would need to recruit 59 foster carers and develop in-house residential care for 20 children. We are realistic about the challenge and the interrelationship with working in partnership with Providers to develop a shared approach.

## **Our Ambition: Foster Care**

Flintshire is proud to be part of the local authority Maethu Cymru: Foster Wales family. As part of the national approach a Flintshire Recruitment and Retention strategy has been developed. The strategy outlines our approach to ensure the sufficiency of in-house foster carers to meet the needs of children looked after in Flintshire County Council. It also outlines the actions undertaken and those planned to ensure foster carer retention. The Recruitment and Retention strategy complements and enables the delivery of this wider Placement Commissioning Strategy.

## **Our Ambition: Residential Care**

Flintshire County Council has commenced an ambitious programme of developing in house Residential Children's Care Homes as part of its Care Closer to Home programme. During 2022/2023 we will be opening 4 registered provisions in Flintshire each with its own individual offer and focus. Where appropriate we are working on a sub-regional level with 2 of

our local provisions forming a partnership with Wrexham and our Health Board. These are being funded through the new RIF funding programme. These provisions are Tŷ Nyth and a crisis flat.

### **Tŷ Nyth: Assessment and Support Centre & Crisis Flat**

Tŷ Nyth will provide short term, accommodation for 8-16 weeks with an intensive MST Therapeutic team on site to support safe family/carer reunification. In addition we are developing a separate provision on the Tŷ Nyth site to provide regulated short term placements in emergencies

We have sought Regional Integrated Fund (RIF) revenue funding to support this development.

### **Park Avenue and Bromfield park (temporary names)**

We have 2 Homes currently under development for Flintshire children – Park Avenue and Bromfield Road. A combination of grant funding has supported the capital development costs associated with these provisions (ICF and Safe Accommodation Grant). However, there are significant revenue costs associated with developing the infrastructure for these provisions as we recruit, and develop staff, prepare our policies and procedures for CIW registration and then commence a careful process of placement matching. This process requires financial ‘front loading’ as the service builds up to run at its optimum and reach a position where we can reduce our reliance on the independent sector, and out of county/ out of Wales placements and begin to realign placement costs to fund local authority based provision. We have used the framework for costing developed by 4C’s to inform the financial forecasting for Bromfield Park which amounts to £345k.

### **Supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children**

We are about to embark on the refurbishment of a 3 bedroom property to provide long term independent supported living accommodation for UASC. Given the level of work that is required it is likely that this provision will open in 2023/24.

### **Ambition for 2023- 2025**

If additional funding was available our plans for residential care could be extended to develop a further 2 registered provisions. We have identified 2 further properties that have the potential for refurbishment and registration as residential Care Homes for children. One could provide support as a general residential care home and the other have a focus on supporting 16-17 year olds who need support with independent living. We have found

particular challenges with supporting this latter group of children and are increasingly reliant on bespoke arrangements that are operating outside of RISCA registration.

We have employed an architect to undertake a feasibility study with costings for these properties to inform a business case for consideration. It is clear that to take the developments forward capital funding would be required for the 2023/24 financial year and revenue funding for the 2024/25 financial year and beyond. It is anticipated that subject to business case approval, indicatively each prospective development would require approximately £0.8-1.0 M in initial capital funding and additionally continued revenue funding of approximately £0.345m per annum when the services become operational.

### **Working with local providers**

If funding was provided the developments would give us a total of 17 placements for our young people. This would not enable to us completely remove our reliance on the independent sector. Our intention would be to work with high quality local providers in Flintshire to develop partnerships that support the principles of not for profit, with surpluses being re-invested into caring for children recognising that this will be a journey, delivered in phases, to reach a position where care services are locally based, locally designed and locally accountable.

### **Workforce infrastructure**

It is also clear that we would require investment to employ a specific Children's RI to become RISCA compliant. This post will need to be recruited and funded with immediacy to help drive this strategic programme.

### **Financial ask**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Total</b>
2022/23	£50k	£350k	£400k
2023/24	£1.8m	£350k	£2.150m
2024/25		£350k	£350k
Total	£1.850	£1.050m	£2.900m

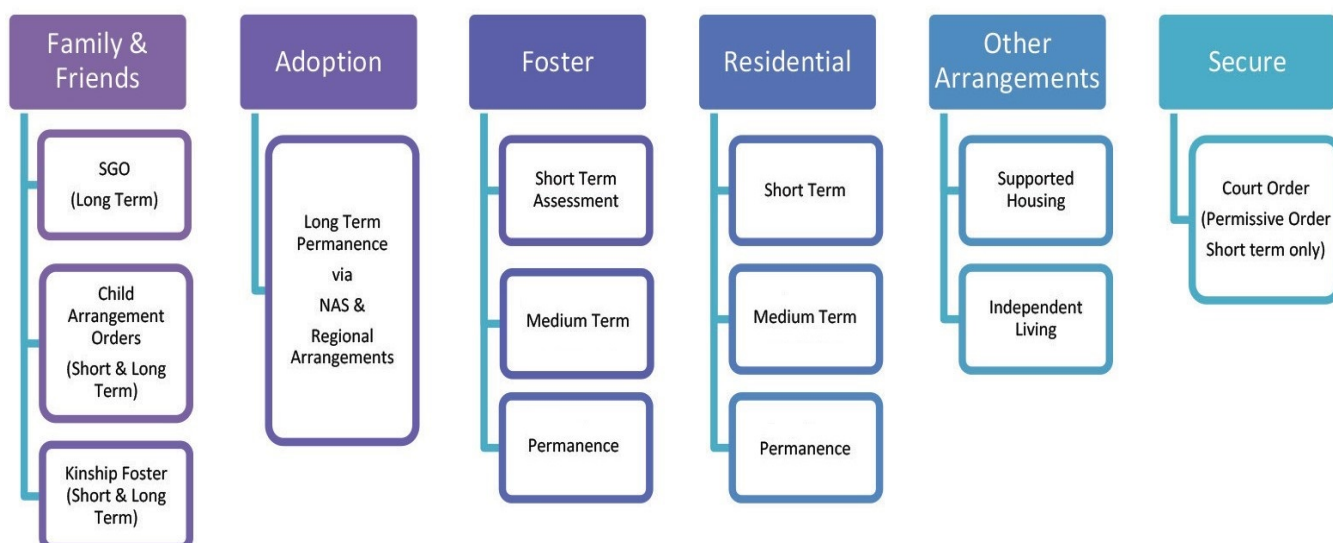
## 2 Introduction

Looked After Children are those children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the Local Authority. Children are accommodated by the Local Authority either through parental agreement or as a result of court proceedings because they are at significant risk of being harmed. A significant proportion of children coming into care have a history of neglect or abuse. Some may have experienced the death of a parent or have parents who are unable to care for them because of illness or disabilities.

The majority of children and young people looked after by Flintshire County Council are placed in foster care. However, there is a growing proportion of young people who need residential care, usually due to their more complex needs.

Our main aim is to support families to care for their own children. This is what the majority of families want and where most children will best achieve their potential. This document is therefore aimed at those children who will only thrive where intervention is needed and placements need to be arranged in the best interests of the child.

For the purpose of this strategy, placement types are represented as follows:



### 2.1 Purpose of the Strategy

Our ambition is to ensure every child has a safe, stable and loving home. Our main aim is to support families to safely care for their own children. However, we recognise that family and friends may not always be appropriate carers. This Strategy: i) sets out the actions we will take over the next 3 years to enable more children to live closer to home and ii) outlines the resources that we need to deliver this ambitious programme.



This strategy:

- **Shapes** our internal services to support children locally and to maximise the benefits of public sector provision in terms of quality and value for money;
- **Commits** to collaborative working with public sector partners across the Regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits;
- **Requires** us to increase placement choice, supplemental to our sufficiency duty to enable good matching;
- **Defines** our relationship to be based on the co-production of outcome focused services, acknowledging that there are a range of different methods for strategic commissioning with multiple partners who may be co-operatives, charities or commercial partners who can work with us to deliver models where surpluses are re-invested into caring for children

The six Local Authority partners in North Wales are signed up to the 'Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs)' National Frameworks for Foster Care and for C&YP Residential Care services.

Representatives from each of the six Local Authority partners participate in the evaluation of potential providers when the 4Cs opens each of the National Frameworks and also in the 4Cs Annual Quality Performance Assessment (AQPA) review of providers on the frameworks. This ensures that the commissioning requirements of the Local Authority partners are addressed when the 4Cs opens each framework, and that through the AQPA the Local Authority partners are actively involved in working with providers to ensure that the type and quality of support meets the needs of LAC&YP.

Representatives from each Local Authority partner meet regularly with the 4Cs to ensure that there is a shared understanding of local need and that any identified gaps in services are understood / addressed.

The 4Cs worked with Local Authority partners to develop the 'Children and Young People's Residential Care and Fostering North Wales Market Position Statement (April 2021 to April 2023) ('the MPS')' which has been published. The purpose of the MPS is to provide an update to providers explaining the current demand and projected future need for foster care and C&YP residential care services in North Wales.

The North Wales Partnership Children's Services Group (which consists of the six Local Authority Heads of Children's Services and strategic leads from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)) has regional oversight and responsibility for the MPS. The Group is committed to working with providers to ensure that there is sufficient provision locally (of acceptable quality) to meet the Local Authority partners sufficiency duty.

## 2.2 Priorities and Desired Outcomes

Flintshire County Council is committed to deliver safe, high quality, supportive placements that support children and young people to develop the skills and resilience to lead fulfilled lives.

Flintshire will seek to support children to remain with their parents, or connected persons, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Appendix 1 sets out the factors that will be considered when making placements. Where placements are commissioned we will seek to support locally based provision wherever possible, and where this is consistent with the needs, circumstances and wishes of the child/young person. Where local based provision is not available we will seek to provide support in North Wales and within third sector and not-for-profit provision before then considering the rest of Wales and England.

A consistent message from many respondents who took part in the consultation for the '**North Wales Population Needs Assessment**' (Published in April 2022) was that there is a significant gap in children's mental health services, waiting lists are too long and families are struggling.

Specific recommendations for improvements were:

- Better access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the neurodevelopmental team for young people. (Please note these are two separate teams).
- Integrating mental health services into schools, especially counselling for primary school children and raised awareness of trauma amongst staff.
- Increasing the number of Looked-after Children nurses.
- Joint working between mental health services and other children's services to streamline care.
- Increasing psychological support for children, especially those in care and less reliance on medication as an intervention.
- More counsellors, especially male counsellors and counsellors speaking Welsh, Polish and other languages.
- One stop shops to find out about and access all services in a local area.
- Making the transition from child to adult services more user-friendly for young people and tailored to the individual's developmental needs.

The work to date on developing the '**North Wales Market Stability Report**' has identified the following:

### **The number of children receiving care and support has increased**

In 2020, there were almost 2,900 children receiving care and support across North Wales. This is 2,300 children for each 100,000 children in the population, which is slightly lower than the rate for Wales as whole of 2,550 children in need for each 100,000 children in the population. The numbers vary across North Wales and over time with no clear trend.

In 2018-19, there were 575 children on the child protection register in North Wales. Although the numbers vary year to year for each local authority, overall for North Wales, the level has remained similar, with a small decrease of 3% (15 children). Due to the small numbers involved it is not possible to identify clear trends as, for example, a dramatic change from one year to the next may be due to one family moving to or from an area.

### **The number of looked after children is not expected to continue to increase**

Although the overall figures for all looked after children have shown a steady increase year-on-year to date this is not expected to continue in the future (Regional Partnership Board, 2019).

### **Children who are care experienced were more vulnerable to the pandemic**

The Rapid Review of the Population Needs Assessment (Regional Partnership Board, 2020) highlighted the impact of the pandemic on care experienced children which included isolation and loneliness and disruptions in access to services. In North Wales, there was an initial dip in child protection referrals but then the rate of referrals returned to expected levels. An increased level of monitoring visits took place to households where there were children on the child protection register – weekly visits instead of the 10-day timescale.

### **There is an increase in newly accommodated looked after children and young people**

In 2021 there were 1,470 local children and young people looked-after by North Wales local authorities which is similar to the national picture across the whole of Wales. The number of children looked after in North Wales has increased by 350 during the time frame between 2017 and 2021. North Wales has a lower number of children looked after per 100,000 population than the rest of Wales, however there are significant variations across the region, from 800 in Flintshire to 1,300 in Wrexham. It is important to note that the number is currently fluctuating rapidly with a significant increase in newly accommodated young people.

### **Market overview**

Despite a shared commitment to prevention and early intervention, there will always be a small proportion of looked after children who need residential placements. Depending on care needs this may be in a:

- Residential Care Homes with paid care staff
- Secure Accommodation Unit
- Residential Family Unit

The updated Market Position Statement (Regional Partnership Board, 2019) provided a breakdown of residential care provision in North Wales. As at 31st March 2020, there were 70 North Wales children living in a care home. The total number of children living in a children's home increased by 133% in North Wales

between 2016 (30 children) and 2020 (70 children).

### **There is a shortage of local residential providers**

In August 2020, ADSS Cymru published a report which examined the case for rebalancing social care provision in Children's Services (ADSS Cymru, 2020). The report identified a significant imbalance of power in the children's residential care market, which is affecting placements and choice, the ability to make the best match to a child's needs, the workload, and the outcomes for children. Without rebalancing, there will be a continued reliance on private providers with, in some cases, high cost, and questionable value for money, greater instability for children and poor outcomes. The aim of any rebalancing must be to develop stable, resilient markets, which offer options and choice, quality care, fewer placement breakdowns, and good outcomes for children.

An increasing demand for residential placements and a lack of supply in local residential providers has resulted in a 'providers market'. Providers are able to be more selective of the young people they accept, which may result in those with higher levels of complex needs and behavioural challenges being more difficult to place. This may be due to the skill / expertise of the provider, a concern about how behaviour might impact other residents and the local community, and worries that all of this might impact upon the outcomes of the service.

Alongside the financial pressure, there is also a pressure on staff time. In the event of a bed becoming available, a number of local services may be seeking to secure it, resulting in competition.

This high demand puts pressure on local authority finances, with providers able to dictate the cost of the provision. There is a risk that expenditure on out of county placements increases as placement costs increase in a demand led market.

North Wales is currently reliant on the independent sector for children's residential care provision. The Children's Transformation Programme and Integrated Care Funding has been used to increase in house provision and fund preventative activity. Local authorities continue to explore opportunities to facilitate a different approach to help reduce the reliance on out of county placements which lead to unsustainable financial pressures for social services and education.

### **There is a shortage of specialist provision for children and young people with complex behavioural and emotional needs**

In 2019 for over half of children placed in residential care were receiving care primarily due to emotional and behavioural needs and two thirds of those children were aged between 13 to 16 years old (Regional Partnership Board, 2019).

There is a significant shortage of specialist placements for young people with significant emotional and behavioural needs in North Wales. Children are often placed in England, away from their families. There is limited provision in England. Social workers struggle to place children with severe needs as providers tend to reserve places to try to place a child with less severe needs.

Some children may have received their education through the Welsh language and therefore have difficulty coping in an English medium school and needing tutor or assistant to provide additional support.

Young people in crisis often attend Accident and Emergency and stay in hospital settings in an emergency situation.

### **There is a shortage of emergency accommodation**

Social services across the UK are facing increased pressures to find placements in emergencies. Locally, we do have situations where no placement can be sourced for a child. This necessitates the development of a holding position to provide accommodation and support until a placement can be found. These situations may arise from difficulties in placing young people following the breakdown of relationships at home, transfer of children where the police have used their powers of protection to remove children and a lack of secure beds for young people with high level needs and welfare risks.

It is important to emphasise that these arrangements are used as a last resort in emergency situations, due to exceptional circumstances and for a short period until a regulated provision can be sourced. Safeguards around unregulated placements include the need for senior manager approval, notification to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as our regulator, a care and support plan, completion of social work visits, involvement of Independent Reviewing Officers and supervision of social workers to look at arrangements/ move on plans.

The arrangements that local authorities have to put in place in emergencies can amount to unregulated placements. Under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 it is an offence for a person to provide a regulated service without being registered in respect of that service.

### **Local market overview**

The Market Position Statement 2021 appraised the market and set out what is happening, residential services needed for children in the region and aspirations for future providers.

- The number of children who live in a children's home has increased, some of these children are able to live in a foster placement but there are currently not enough foster carers with the right skills to support them.
- Some of our children who live in a children's home live outside of local authority boundary despite sufficient in-area capacity.

What we don't need:

- We do not encourage expansion in North Wales by independent providers of residential care for children whose services are not developed to meet the needs of our children.
- We do not want providers to operate children's homes without a clear model of care or deliver standard provision only.

What we want:

- We want to work with new and existing providers and support them to deliver models of care that will meet the needs of our children.
- We want to work with new and existing providers and encourage them to develop their businesses in a way that, in addition to improving outcomes for our children, also provide a wider social value to our communities.
- We want providers who are able to safely care for our children with multiple high needs and are able to provide alternative accommodation to secure welfare provision.
- We want providers who will work in partnership with us during periods of transition including stepping down to live with a foster carer or reunification with their family.
- Welsh culture is very important to us as a region and we want more providers who are able to deliver their services in Welsh.

### **Current and projected trends**

- Challenges in accessing secure welfare beds and local alternatives that provide crisis intervention and diversion from secure accommodation.
- Challenges in sourcing appropriate local placements for children and young people with complex needs.
- Need for additional and appropriate short term care arrangements and facilities for children. This also includes children with additional needs and on occasions their siblings.
- Children aged 16+ often have complex needs and placement options are limited, a strategic approach is needed in supporting the accommodation and support needs of young people ages 16-18 and for care leavers.

### **Impact of commissioning practices on the market**

All Wales Frameworks are used to commission individual placements across a range of placement types. These frameworks deliver strategic level partnerships with providers in fostering and residential services. The frameworks are used where either the Regions Sufficiency Duty necessitates external commissioning or where best quality, outcome delivery and value for money is achieved through external commissioning rather than internal service delivery. The All Wales Frameworks are managed by the 4C's.

The vehicle used for e-tendering external fostering and residential placements is the Children's Commissioning Support Resources (CCSR) which offers transparent and outcomes focused placement commissioning for both Framework and Non-Framework regulated placements and allows compliance with the relevant procurement guidance and regulation that underpins commissioning.

### **Provision of service in the Welsh language**

Children who are placed out of country due to lack of specialist placements do not have the option to receive care services in Welsh. This is a particular issue in Gwynedd.

## 2.3 Methodology

This strategy is being refreshed in light of Welsh Government's commitment to eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children.

The First Minister and the Deputy Minister for Social Services are clear that the 'Eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children' Programme for Government commitment is a top priority for delivery. This commitment itself builds on the long held view of Ministers that private profit be removed from the care of looked after children and aligns with calls made by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Voices from Care.

Further, children themselves have expressed upset at being looked after by profit making organisations, that they feel 'bought and sold'.

*"Eliminating profit making from the care of looked after children is one of the highest priorities for this Government. We believe that public care should mean that children are cared for by local authorities or other not for profit providers where social values and the best interests of and outcomes for children are the overriding motives".*

[Deputy Minister for Social Services](#)

The provision of public/not-for-profit foster, Kinship and Special Guardianship placements are inextricably linked to the delivery of this commitment. The wider Programme for Government commitments place an emphasis on increasing the focus on keeping families together. Where children cannot remain with birth parents, we want to increase the use of Kinship and Special Guardianship arrangements where it is possible and in the best interests of the child to do so.

Our strategic direction is to rebalance provision in line with this commitment. This work is underpinned by intelligence gathered for the development of key documents that are in development:

The North Wales Social Care and Well-being Services Improvement Collaborative, together with the involvement of all six North Wales Local Authorities and BCUHB has published the second regional Population Needs Assessment (PNA) and is working with Local Authority and BCUHB partners to publish a regional Market Stability Report (MSR).

The PNA and MSR will be the foundation for the future commissioning of services for C&YP across the regions Health and Social Care Sector ensuring that C&YPs needs are met sufficiently.

The PNA and MSR will be continually reviewed in order to ensure that partners have a shared view on need and sufficiency on a regional basis.

Work undertaken to formulate the MSR has identified the particular need to increase the availability of emergency and longer term accommodation for

C&YP with complex needs including mental health, learning disability and emotional behavioural needs.

Other relevant reference sources include:

- Market Position Statement (MPS) for Children and young people's residential care and fostering and secure accommodation.
- Foster Wales Flintshire Recruitment & Retention Strategy 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



## **3 Social Care & Policy Content**

### **3.1 Relevant National Legislation and Guidance**

Flintshire County Council will ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for all types of children who are looked after under Section 79 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act).

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure the placement is made within the local authority's own area (section 81(9) of the Act), unless it is not reasonably practical to do so or there are overriding reasons for placing a child out of area, the primary overriding reason being safeguarding.

In keeping with the duty and aim of promoting the upbringing of a child by their family, there is a clear emphasis in the Act that, unless it is not consistent with the child's well-being, arrangements must be made for the child who needs accommodation to live with a parent or a person with parental responsibility or residence/child arrangement order. Where this is not possible, preference should be given to placement with a relative, friend or other person connected to the child or young person.

If neither of these is possible, a range of sufficient alternative provision should be available within the Local Authority, including foster carers and children's homes, supported lodgings and secure accommodation.

It is this 'sufficient alternative accommodation' that is the focus of this Placement & Commissioning Strategy.

Under the Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, Flintshire County Council has a duty to take into account the well-being of individuals when creating sustainability plans. The well-being goals of the act will inform how sufficient alternative accommodation will be sourced, taking into account its effect on the wellbeing of the individual as well as its wider impact on sustainability in Wales.

For individuals with additional learning needs, The Local Authority must adhere to the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which creates a duty to consider how barriers to learning will be overcome as part of the placement brokerage process, ensuring that the learner's views, wishes and feelings are at the heart of the process.

As a Welsh Local Authority, we must also comply with the Welsh Language Standards Regulations 2017, and will take into account individuals preferred language for communication and correspondence when seeking placements.

Welsh Government have set a clear vision for services for looked after children and care leavers. As part of this vision eight 'Programme for Government' commitments have been developed to improve the lives of care experienced children and young people and families on the edge of care. Taken together, these commitments will help transform the way care is provided for looked after children in Wales.

Other sources of relevant legislation and guidance include:

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales 'No Wrong Door' report;
- Part 1 Scheme for Children and Young People under the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010;
- 'Five Ways to Wellbeing';
- ADSS Cymru report which examined the case for rebalancing social care provision in Children's Services (ADSS Cymru, 2020).

Central to the Vision is Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government' (Removing profit from care) which details their commitment to eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children. Welsh Ministers are clear that profit should not be made from caring for vulnerable children and their families. The aim is to ensure that public money invested in accommodation for care experienced children does not lead to profit, but instead any surpluses are reinvested into children's services to deliver better outcomes, service improvement and further professional development. This means that the care of looked after children in Wales will be provided by public sector, charitable or not for profit organisations.

To support the journey needed to transition to a not-for-profit system Welsh Government have announced a £30m funding package over the next 3 years - £10m each year.

### **3.2 National Context**

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales 'No Wrong Door' report;
- Part 1 Scheme for Children and Young People under the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010;
- 'Five Ways to Wellbeing';
- Welsh Government 'Programme for Government' (Removing profit from care);
- ADSS Cymru report which examined the case for rebalancing social care provision in Children's Services (ADSS Cymru, 2020).

The Children's Commissioner for Wales 'No Wrong Door' report has been a driver for commissioning external consultancy support to assist the Partnership Children's Services Group in formulating a strategy to develop improved working and ease of access to Local Authority, BCUHB and CAMHS services. The initial phase of the commissioned support was focused on developing the strategy for this, and will be followed by the implementation of the strategy phase in 2022 / 2023.

The Emotional Health Wellbeing and Resilience workstream (part of the C&YPs Transformation Programme in North Wales) funded by the Welsh Government Transformation Fund was established with the purpose of implementing service

models that will enable access to support that builds emotional resilience in children, young people and their parents / carers and addresses the root causes known to contribute to emotional distress and risk of family / placement breakdown which, in the worst case scenario, leads to children and young people becoming looked after. The aim of this workstream is to reduce the escalation of need and risk, improve personal outcomes and build capacity for all C&YP to access information, advice and assistance in a timely manner.

Identifying need at the earliest point and providing the appropriate information, advice and assistance and early help where required can delay or prevent escalating need. Therefore, the focus of the early intervention workstream is to implement a collaborative approach across North Wales partner agencies (Local Authorities; Education and Children's Services; Health; CAMHS) through the development of a meaningful integrated framework and working model with guiding principles for supporting the healthy development of emotional health, wellbeing and resilience of children and young people aged 0-18 years, in support of the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' principles.

The [Programme for Government](#) sets out the ambitious commitments Welsh Government will deliver over the next 5 years. These will tackle the challenges that are faced and will improve the lives of people across Wales.

In relation for this strategy, areas of consideration are:

- Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.
- Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers.
- Eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after.
- Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable.
- Strengthen public bodies in their role as 'corporate parent'.

Across Wales there are a number of areas where significant pressures are being experienced in relation to children's services in Wales. These can be summarised as:

### **1) Responding to the Pandemic**

Children's services across Wales met the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing to provide services, including face-to-face work with vulnerable families, with creativity and determination; driven by a focus upon public duty and keeping children safe.

As restrictions ceased, we have seen changing complexity and increasing demand for services as the aftermath of the pandemic takes its toll. We are seeing the associated increases in poverty, domestic abuse, unemployment, isolation, family breakdown and homelessness, linked to the pandemic. These issues will continue to have an impact upon people's mental health and well-being, to the extent that

more parents and children will need services across the spectrum of need, delivered by a resilient and robust workforce.

## **2) Prevention and Family Support.**

Working on the underlying causes that prevent children from entering the care system needs to be a national priority for all public services. With the right investment, local authorities can continue their already well-evidenced drive to improve interventions and services that support families and prevent family breakdown. These centre on well targeted, evidenced and strength based therapeutic interventions that are centred around trusted relationships.

## **3) Safeguarding**

Safeguarding and supporting the well-being of children and families is everybody's business, and it requires a multi-agency and community response. In the year ahead, Safeguarding Board Member Agencies will re-design their multi-agency safeguarding response to the increasing number of young people who are exposed to harm by influences outside the home, such as criminal exploitation.

Responding to the needs and challenges of adolescents is one of society's more complex issues and we can conclude that the current looked after system does not always deliver best outcomes. We need to better understand what works for children in these circumstances.

## **4) Children in care**

At present, Wales faces a crisis in the shortage of available and suitable placements for young people. The consequences present an impending perfect storm where authorities may find themselves unable to safeguard a child in the foreseeable future. The impact of this for children and their families is considerable.

This is despite the concerted efforts by local authorities to increase the supply of suitable placements. Alongside partners and stakeholders, we need to continue to overcome barriers involved in the provision of sufficient, suitable, stable, and resilient local foster homes, children's homes and supported accommodation. Alongside this, we need to continue to recruit adopters who can meet the needs of children with an adoption plan.

There has been a significant shift in the provision and ownership of residential care placements, with local authorities less likely to own and operate children's homes. It is clear the current market model is not delivering sufficiency. There is more that can be done to re-balance and re-shape the care placement market, so that there is a mixed economy of service provision and placements, which actually meet the real and present needs of children in care today.

Welsh Government's investment to allow local authorities to purchase, enhance or remodel assets in a phased way is integral to facilitating this rebalance of care.

## **5) Workforce**

Workforce well-being is a critical factor in delivering effective social care. There is a shortage of experienced qualified social workers within children's services.

Immediate investment in this workforce is required so that, over time, capacity mirrors demand.

#### **6) Resources**

Disruption to children's education, social and family lives means that it is vital that sufficient sustainable resources are in place to ensure capacity can meet demand.

It is of critical importance that Welsh Government continues to support local authorities in their work as they seek to intervene with families earlier and prevent problems from escalating.

### **3.3 Key Messages: Research and Good Practice**

Flintshire work closely with the principles of Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru, also known as the 4C's. This approach works to improve the way local authorities commission looked after children placement services. As well as significant cost savings, benefits include improved management information, consistent and secure collaborative tools and processes across authorities to facilitate individual placement matching, contract award and contract monitoring, collaborative risk management, and quality assurance of providers; sustained reduction in prices; and an environment of partnership with the independent sector to commission.

Flintshire are using research done into new sustainable care models that support individuals care and support needs on an ongoing basis. This will help maintain the level of provision that is available for children.

Outcome focused practice will be essential to providing appropriate placements for children and to make sure that they are supported in what matters to them. This will be bolstered by an efficient process to find the best placement at the best time.

Flintshire aims to bring together both commissioners and practitioners to create a close working understanding of the strengths, knowledge and possible barriers both may face. Creating strong partnership working with both health and education is also vital to determine how cases are progressing and ensuring individuals have holistic support for their needs. Individual Placement Agreements are used in Flintshire to clearly outline and evidence why a placement is being purchased and what agencies are responsible for delivering on that support.

Flintshire understand that in order to source good, supportive and sustainable placements we must explore all avenues of support and placement types to help make a well informed decision for the child.

Throughout the whole process Flintshire is committed to keeping the child central to the whole process and to be mindful throughout of what matters to the individual and making sure that they are appropriately informed.

In addition to the key messages given in section 2.2 above, the work to date on developing the '**North Wales Market Stability Report**' has also identified the following:

### **Fostering services**

Population overview:

#### **The number of children is predicted to decrease**

The estimated number of children (aged 0-15) in 2020 and the projections for 2040 demonstrate the number of children in North Wales is predicted to decrease over the coming years (Welsh Government, 2020). This decrease can be seen across all of the local authorities in North Wales, with the exception of Gwynedd which is predicted to have a slight increase (1.8%). Overall the number of children in North Wales is expected to reduce by 6.1%.

The Market Position Statement update published in 2021 gave an overview of key statistics;

- The number of children who required a foster placement increased by 34% during the period April 2016 (600 children) to March 2020 (805 children).
- As at the 31st March 2020, there were 805 North Wales children living with a foster carer, 40% (325 children) were living with an independent foster carer and the majority of those children required a specialist placement in order to support their needs, which could not be supported by our in house services.
- There are currently 11 children who are living in a children's home who could be supported by specialist foster carers. There are not enough foster carers with the right skills to support the needs profiles of our children.
- During the period April 2020 to the end of February 2021, there were 34 children who required a parent and child placement and assessment.

### **Demand for foster care has increased**

The number of children in foster care in North Wales has increased year on year since 2015 to around 945 in 2020. Wrexham had the largest increase, with the number of children doubling. Gwynedd also saw a significant increase. Numbers in the other local authorities have fluctuated.

Despite the increasing numbers in foster placements, the Market Position Statement (2019) expressed that a large increase was not expected in the future.

Local authorities have in-house foster care places and independent fostering agencies providing places. Some of the independent foster agencies are charities or co-operatives.

### **Predicted increased demand for foster parents**

The National Foster Network calculated a need for, an estimated, 550 new foster parents across Wales every year to keep up with demand. This suggests there could be a shortage of foster placements in coming years, given the increasing demand.

### **Sufficiency issues for some children**

The Market Position Statement (Regional Partnership Board, 2019) identified sufficiency issues with finding placements for children with particular needs including:

- Respite care
- Young offenders
- Refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers
- Young parents
- Sibling groups
- Emergency situations

The stability of the workforce is an issue, with increasing demand for placements and the number of placements projected to not meet with the forecast demand.

The Foster Wales website facilitated the joining of the 22 Local Authorities to form a national network of local fostering expertise. Its focus is to make a bigger impact on a national level, working together with foster carers, to build better futures for local children. Sharing one brand and, one voice, to strengthen recruitment and support of foster carers.

### **The National Fostering Framework**

The National Fostering Framework (2018) finds children who live with foster

carers in their own locality more likely to thrive and children in local authority provision more likely to stay in their home authority, enabling them to maintain important links. It is vital local authorities increase local placements and reduce out of area placements.

According to the National Fostering Framework (2018), connected fostering (with family or friends) has seen increased demand. It also finds that local authority placements have better outcomes for children. The framework states that local authorities need to be able to have capacity to facilitate this or otherwise ensure that the child has opportunities to maintain connections if placed in alternative fostering.

### **Market stability**

Regional challenges:

The Market Position Statement (2019) and 'Foster Wales' (2021) identified challenges to the stability of fostering services in North Wales and Wales as a whole listed below:

- Recruitment and retention issues
- Placements for children with particular needs including; respite care, young offenders, refugees/immigrants/asylum seekers, young parents, sibling groups and emergency situations
- It is estimated that Wales will need 550 new foster parents every year to meet demand.

### **Consideration of market quality**

The State of the Nation report from the Fostering Agency (2021) provided insight into the quality of foster services across the whole of Wales, the key findings were:

- 44% of independent and 51% of local authority foster carers said they were not supported to maintain contact with children they had cared for. Foster carers perceived this as 'cruel', ending significant relationships for children who have experienced so much loss already.
- Some fostering services are not maintaining foster carer approval, even if they intend to continue fostering. This, and dropping financial support, are barriers to young people entering 'When I am Ready'.
- 20% independent and 12% local authority foster carers have no children in their care. It recommended better use of foster carers skills to meet the needs of children.
- 57% local authority foster carers had an agreed learning and development plan, 31% did not and 12% didn't know. 66% independent foster carers had a learning and development plan, 22% didn't and 12% didn't know
- Local authority foster approvals were more restrictive and limited than



independent approvals, it recommends local authorities assessments use broader approval statuses, robust matching procedures and placement stability processes

- Foster carers would like to build relationships with social workers and children in their care to have stability and continuity of social worker. Over the previous two years, 53% of foster carers had one supervising social worker, 29% had two, 12% had three and 6% had four or more
- Foster carers felt 'dismissed', 'ignored' and their role is not valued by the social care workforce. Lack of respect for their commitment, skills and dedication is a long-term, well reported issue in fostering
- Foster carers want allowances to cover the full cost of caring for a child and payment reflecting their value as a member of the team around the child. Sufficient payments are a must to attract new skilled, committed foster carers
- Lack of placement choice. To secure good matches for children, services would need to see a significant increase in access to local, quality placements
- Staffing levels are not sufficient to provide required support for foster families. Services would like staffing to enable best practice and improve standards
- Trauma-informed practice – concerns about access to training and additional services for those caring for traumatised children. Services would like children looked after to have priority status for services across health and education
- Support for foster carers with improved peer support services and out of hours provision. Services with this support saw improved retention and stability.

### **Current and projected trends**

Key current trends and projections for the future of foster services:

- Increased demand for placements
- Lack of places for older children
- Lack of places for children with complex care plans / behavioural issues
- Lack of foster parents with skills to support children with complex needs
- Projected increase in demand for placements
- Predicted potential shortage of placements, supply not matching demand.

### **Adoption services**

#### **Population overview**

Number of children looked after placed for adoption by the local authorities

in North Wales in 2020 / 2021 was 44.

### **North Wales Adoption Service overview**

The North Wales Adoption Service provides a regional adoption service on behalf of Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey local authorities. Working regionally helps find new families more effectively, place children quicker and improve adoption support services. In April 2014 it was integrated into the National Adoption Service. The services comply with updated adoption legislation, regulations and statutory guidance in line with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) and with the policy and procedures of the service, within the resources allocated. There is a framework which aims to make it easier for adopters, children and young people get support when needed.

Services provided by the adoption service include:

- Preparing the child for adoption
- Family finding and matching
- Safeguarding children
- Provision of adoption support
- Recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters
- Preparing to adopt training (pre/post approval)
- Adoption support (pre/post adoption, buddy system, post adoption contact)
- Birth parent counselling
- Relinquished babies
- Services for adopted adults.

### **Current and predicted trends**

The following issues were raised with regards to adoption services for children:

- Highest placement need is for children from the East
- Highest number of adopters are from the East
- Fewer adopters in the West and children need to be placed away from the East
- Nationally there are more children than approved adopters available
- Consideration of the number of Welsh language speakers (adopters / children)

The following issues were raised with regards to adoption services for adults:

- Adults requesting their birth records to find their birth parents was shut down during the pandemic, majority of services have resumed

- but there is a backlog
- Staffing - 43 staff, 10 are off or due to go off on maternity leave, it is difficult to recruit to fixed term posts so the ability to assess may be impacted in 2022 / 2023.

### **Quality reports**

The Quality of Service Review from the North Wales Adoption Service (2020) highlighted the following areas to improve market stability:

- Increase the number of approved adopters
- Reduce the number of children waiting for an adoptive family
- Develop the adoption support service
- Recruitment - sessional workers and adoption panel vacancies

Care inspectorate Wales (2019) inspection identified these areas for improvement:

- Further develop quality assurance processes and assessment of the degree to which aims and objectives of the statement of purpose are met and evidence demonstrating how these support well-being outcomes for children
- The availability of the 'Active Offer', to provide services in the Welsh language
- The statement of purpose and adopters' information pack includes information about the independent review mechanism so adopters are aware of this
- Intermediary files should include a clear audit trail of work undertaken

### **3.4 Local Context**

A developing North Wales Market Position Statement (MPS) provides information on the current demand for residential care placements/fostering placements and secure accommodation placements for looked after children and young people from across North Wales, and the ambition.

The MPS communicates the North Wales region's joint vision for the strategic commissioning of placements to the market, which is to:

**Meet our Sufficiency Duty by providing the right placement choice and enable good matching based on our regional needs, through;**

- Shaping our internal services which will enable us to support our regional partners;
- Working in partnership with stakeholders, and a range of public and private sector partners;

- Working in collaboration with public sector partners across the regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits;
- co-produce outcomes focussed services, acknowledging that there are a range of different methods for strategic commissioning with multiple partners who may be co-operatives, charities or commercial partners.

This also supports Welsh Government's commitment to eradicating profit from care.

Flintshire had mapped the current service commission of high cost low volume placements for Looked After Children and is heavily reliant on independent provision in this purchase having no residential service provision within its local authority area. As a result, the Council are addressing this through the development of innovative models to build local, not for profit capacity to support positive outcomes for children and young people looked after. These are described in section 6.

However, whilst the new provision is in development, the levels and complexity of referrals at a local level remain high. It has become increasingly difficult to source suitable placements, and the Council is finding itself in a position where short term bespoke local arrangements have been necessary outside of RISCA regulation.

### **3.5 Existing Strategic Placement Commissioning Partnerships**

The North Wales region consists of Wrexham, Gwynedd, Flintshire, Anglesey, Denbighshire and Conwy local authorities. Local authorities work in partnership with social services, health, the third and independent sectors, carers and others in order to ensure that the care provided to children is of the highest quality and provides value for money, and most importantly provides the best outcomes.

The local authority partners are full members of the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) and commission fostering, residential and independent supported living placements via the 4C's Frameworks. Where placements are not available through the Frameworks arrangements are in place to commission placements 'off framework'.

The Council are part of [Maethu Cymru/ Foster Wales](#) the national network of Local Authority fostering services across Wales. Maethu Cymru/Foster Wales is raising the profile of local authority fostering in Wales, with a view to increasing the number of foster carers and families available to the growing number of children who need them, and provide a more consistent and quality service to foster children and families alike.

Flintshire are working closely across North Wales and with Health services to develop a strategic response to the 'A Healthier Wales plan developed by Welsh Government. We are also developing proposals to enhance placement choice and stability for looked after children in the area.

Flintshire County Council works in partnership with Action for Children, who run a service called Arosfa, to deliver short breaks and respite to children and families with disabilities.

Flintshire County Council also works in partnership with Universal Assist to deliver supporting housing arrangements to Young People who are preparing to leave care. This partnership is via a Service Level Agreement.

Flintshire County Council also work alongside Wrexham County Borough Council in the development of services that will provide short term residential accommodation for four children, plus one emergency room, for children aged 11 to 18 years.

### 3.6 Corporate Priorities

Flintshire has a number of other strategies, groups and plans which will feed into and support the placement strategy.

These are:

- Looking after you: Flintshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan (which includes Care Leavers)
- Flintshire County Council Plan
- Flintshire County Council Well-being Plan
- Social Services Programme Board
- Looked After Children Permanence Policy
- Public Service Board and Regional Partnership groups
- Procurement & Commissioning Strategy 2016- 2021
- Foster Carer Retention Schedule and Development Plan
- Flintshire Fostering Friendly Policy
- Flintshire being a 'foster friendly' employer.
- When I am Ready framework
- RAP (Repatriation and Prevention) – a joint venture with Action for Children, CAMHS and Flintshire County Council.
- A developing North Wales Social Care and Wellbeing Services Improvement Collaborative (NWSCWSIC) Market Position Statement (MPS) for Children and young people's residential care and fostering and secure accommodation
- Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy

# SECTION 2

## 4 Looked After Children Data and Trends

The primary method of establishing sound statistics to inform Flintshire's Placement Strategy is via research and data analysis.

In 2021 there were 1,470 local children and young people looked-after by North Wales local authorities. Of these, 53% were boys and 47% girls, which is similar to the national picture across the whole of Wales (*Reference: North Wales Population Needs Assessment*).

The number of children looked after by Local Authorities in North Wales has been increasing steadily over the 5 years prior to 2022, at a rate of between 5 and 8 per cent per year. At the end of March 2022 however, there were 248 children looked after in Flintshire, slightly fewer than at the end of the previous year. Between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022, 62 children started to be looked after, and 67 children left care. There were 191 placements made in the year, for 124 children. The majority of placement moves are planned and those coming into care in an emergency will also experience a placement move shortly after becoming looked after.

From national comparative data for March 2021, Flintshire's rate of children looked after was well below the Wales average, and the lowest in North Wales. The cohort of children and young people that are coming through are, on the whole, children with more complex needs, which is creating a challenge in finding appropriate placements with increasing demand for accommodating children, which has risen incrementally during the last decade.

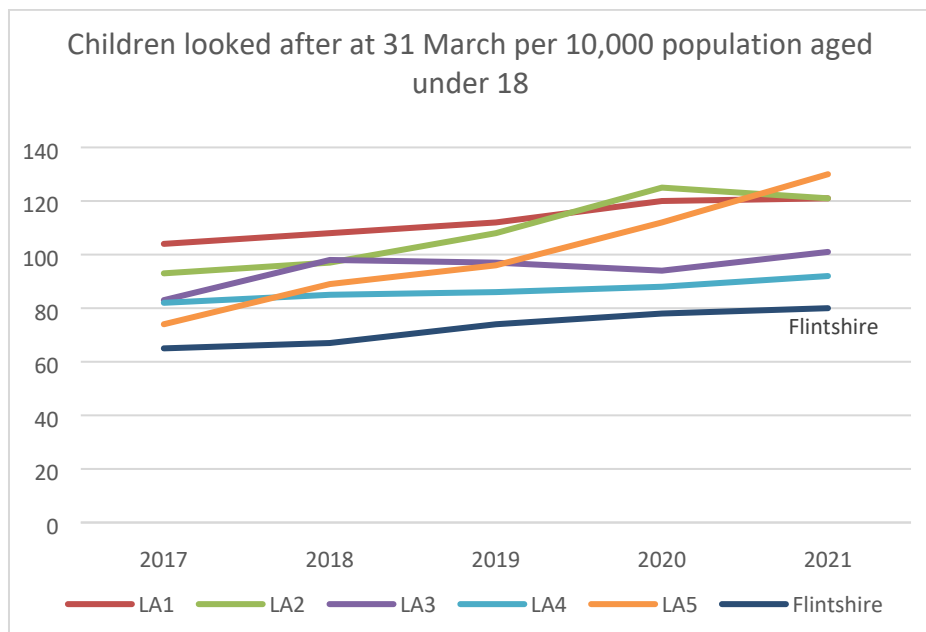
The percentage usage of residential placements hasn't altered since last year. However, we are using slightly fewer in-house foster care placements, and slightly more connected person placements and Independent Fostering Agency placements. The percentage of placements made outside Wales remains low for a Local Authority that borders England, at 16%. However, we have seen a significant increase this year in children placed within the Flintshire boundary, rather than in other Welsh authorities. We closely monitor the number of children placed out of county, and having previously identified the need to develop viable alternatives to placing children in residential placements out of county, our strategy now includes the development of in-house provision.

248 children were looked after by Flintshire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, with the following profile:

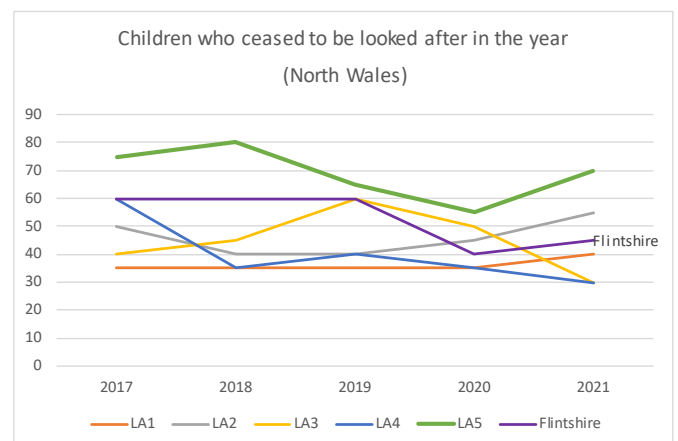
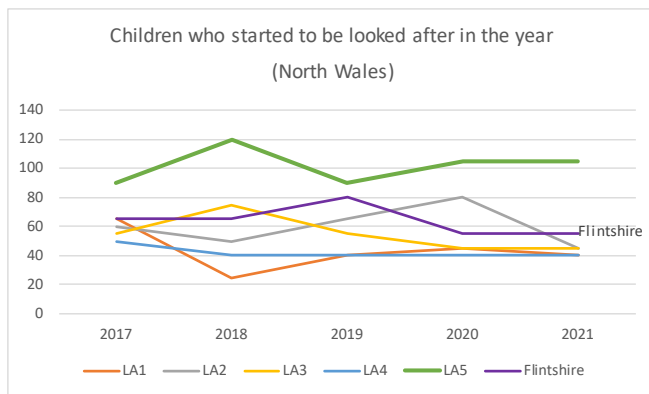
Children looked after on 31 March 2022, by legal status, age and gender

Legal Status	FEMALE						MALE					TOTAL	
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+		<1	10-15	1-4	16+	5-9		
Full Care Order		9	16	44	20	89		43	9	23	26	101	190
Interim Care Order	2	4	2	1	2	11	1	5	4		4	14	25
Placement Order Granted	1	9	4			14			7			7	21
Single Period Accom Sec 20/76				4	2	6		3		3		6	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>248</b>

The chart below shows the trend over 5 years of rate of looked after children per 10,000 population by North Wales Local Authority, recorded on the census day of 31<sup>st</sup> March. Flintshire's numbers have remained comparatively low, and significantly lower than the Welsh Average, but following an upward trend. [Data is sourced from <https://statswales.gov.wales/> and numbers have been rounded to preserve anonymity]



Comparative figures for children entering care and children leaving care are presented below:



The profile of Flintshire children entering care between April 2021 and March 2022, by age, gender, legal status and reason is given below:

Children who started to be looked after in the year (April 2021 to Mar 2022), by legal status, reason, age and gender

Legal Status	FEMALE					MALE					TOTAL	
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+	<1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+		
<b>Emergency Protection Order</b>								1	1		2	2
Family in acute stress								1	1		2	2
<b>Full Care Order</b>										4	4	4
Family in acute stress										4	4	4
<b>Interim Care Order</b>	3	4	2	1		10	1	3	2	2	8	18
Abuse or neglect	3	3	2	1		9	1	1			2	11
Family dysfunction		1				1		1		1	2	3
Absent parenting								1	2	1	4	4
<b>Single Period Accomm Sec 20/76</b>	1	2		5	1	9	1			4	6	15
Abuse or neglect	1	2			1	4	1			1	2	6
Disability or illness										1	1	2
Family in acute stress				3		3				1	1	4
Family dysfunction				1		1				1	1	2
Absent parenting				1		1					1	1
<b>Under Police Prot - In La Accm</b>		3	1	5	2	11		4	3	4	12	23
Abuse or neglect		3	1	4	1	9		4	3	4	12	21
Family in acute stress				1		1					1	1
Absent parenting					1	1					1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	4	9	3	11	3	30	2	7	6	11	6	32



Reasons for children leaving care in the same 12 month period were as follows:

**Children who ceased to be looked after in the year (April 2021 to Mar 2022), by age and reason for ceasing**

Reason for leaving care	<1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+	Total
When I Am Ready					3	3
Adopted		4	1			5
Returned home	2	11	8	17	6	44
Special Guardianship Order		2	2	1		5
Independent Living with support					6	6
Independent Living - no formal support					2	2
Transferred to Adult Services					1	1
Other reason					1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>67</b>

## 5 Placements Profile

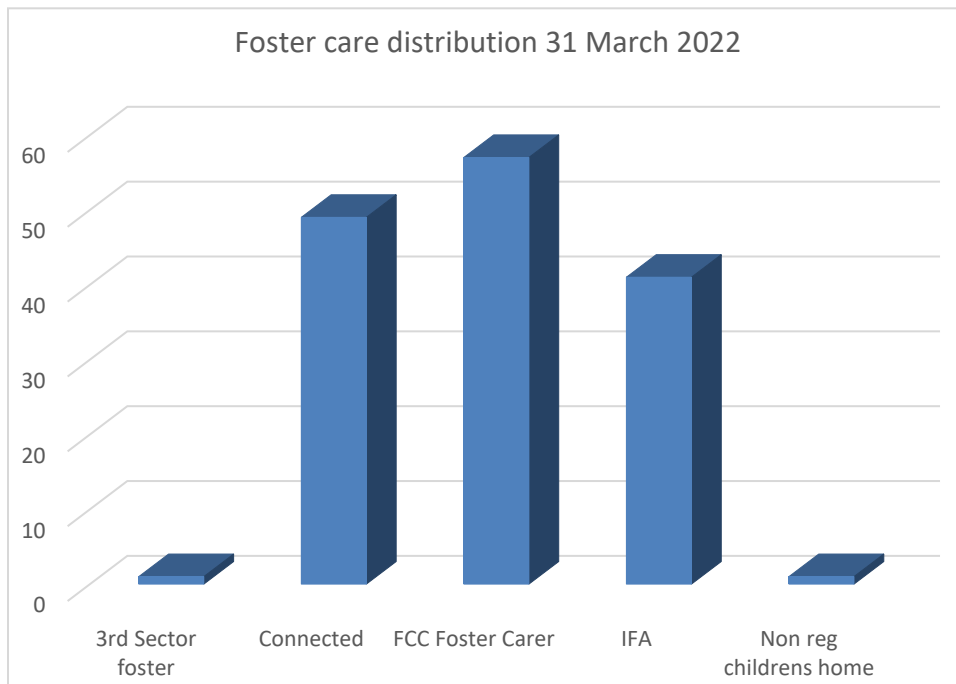
The following charts show the profile of a snapshot of children looked after on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, by age and placement type:

Row Labels	<1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+	Total
<b>In Flintshire</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>148</b>
Children's Home				5	7	12
Connected person placement	1	4	8	14	5	32
FCC Foster Carer	1	3	9	21	7	41
Independent Fostering Agency		4	3	7	2	16
Independent living					2	2
Adoptive placement		1				1
Parent & Child 3rd sector		1				1
Placed with parent	1	9	18	14	1	43
<b>Outside Flintshire in Wales</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>57</b>
3rd Sector foster carer				1		1
Children's Home				6	2	8
Connected person placement		3	3	3	2	11
FCC Foster Carer	1	3	4	4	1	13
Independent Fostering Agency		6	2	9	3	20
Independent living					1	1
Adoptive placement		3				3
<b>Outside Wales</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>43</b>
Children's Home				7	4	11
Connected person placement			3	3		6
FCC Foster Carer			2	1		3
Independent Fostering Agency		3		1	1	5
Independent living					4	4
Non-registered children's home					1	1
Adoptive placement		2				2
Placed with parent				3	5	8
Residential School				1	1	2
Secure accommodation					1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>248</b>

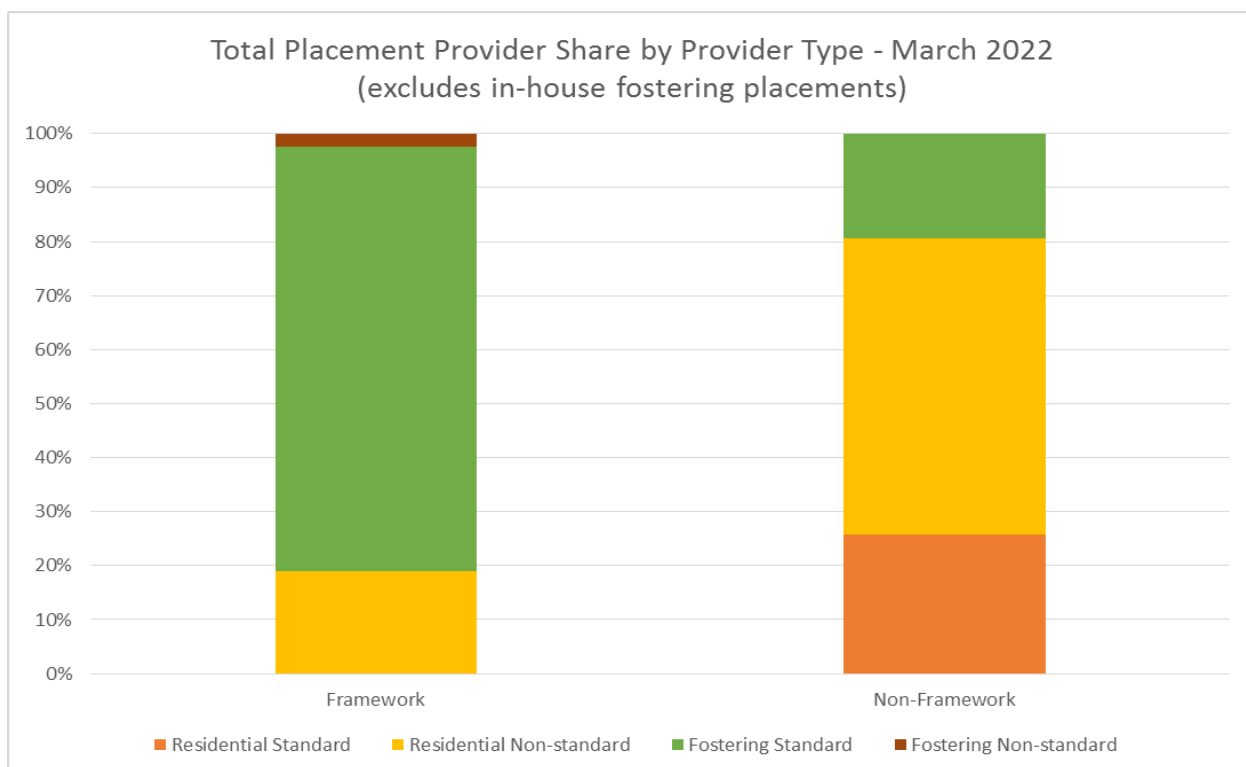
The chart above tells us that:

- 60% of looked after children live in placements in Flintshire, and another 23% live outside Flintshire but in Wales.
- The majority of children in care are aged between 5-15.
- 83% live with their parents or foster carers or kinship carers.

The following chart shows the profile of a snapshot of foster care placement distribution on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, by foster care placement type:



The following chart illustrates the placement provider share by provider type for framework and non-commissioned framework placements.



## 6 Current Placement Provision

### North Wales Data on Residential and Fostering Provision

- The detail on private / commercial C&YP residential care settings in North Wales is:
  - Number of settings = 40
  - Number of beds available = 153*(Source = CCSR as @ 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022)*
- The detail on charitable / third sector C&YP residential care settings in North Wales is:
  - Number of settings = 2
  - Number of beds available = 9*(Source = CCSR as @ 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022)*
- The detail on Local Authority C&YP residential care settings in North Wales is:
  - Number of settings = 3
  - Number of beds available = 17*(Source = CCSR as @ 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022)*
- The detail on private / commercial fostering capacity in North Wales is:
  - Number of settings = 207
  - Number of beds available = 472*(Source = CCSR as @ 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022)*
- The detail on charitable / third sector fostering capacity in North Wales is:
  - Number of settings = 7
  - Number of beds available = 16*(Source = CCSR as @ 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022)*
- The detail on Local Authority fostering capacity in North Wales is:
  - Number of settings = 453
  - Number of beds available = 776*(Source = CCSR as @ 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022)*

### Rebalancing Local Foster Care Provision

We have a pool of experienced and committed foster carers and have been able to grow our foster care numbers. Applications for fostering are typically made after a 'skills to foster' course. The reality is that we have not had the capacity to respond to the pace of placement demand. The provision of appropriate kinship placements is significantly greater than that of 5 years ago and the focus of this work, within the context of court timescales, has impacted on the overall capacity of the Fostering service. It is recognised that investment in fostering is a critical interdependent component of reducing, and managing, the demand for residential placements.

Recruitment targets need to reflect the current use and loss of our available provision, considering current placement availability, unmet need, annual terminations of approval and looked after population.

The recruitment targets identified for 2022-25 are based on current and predicted service need and aspirations, the profile of the children that we couldn't place during 2020-2021 and the Local Authority's placement sufficiency strategy. Our realistic targets are reflective of the local authority's strategic financial planning and are aligned to the child and family service improvement program.

### Approval Targets

Placement type	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Short Term	8	9	10	27
11+	4	5	6	15
Children with complex needs	0	0	0	0
Sibling Groups	1	2	2	5
Parent and Child	0	1	1	2
Respite	1	1	2	4
UASC	2	2	2	6
Total	16	20	23	59

Calculation figures above reflect the total amount of approvals needed to recruit new foster carers in Flintshire. However, 2019-2022 showed an approval figure of 19 over three years. Therefore in the current circumstances, an approval of 59 new foster carers between 2022 – 2025 is outside of current capacity and will require a focus on partnership delivery within the ethos of moving towards a 'not for profit' approach .

Our Special Guardianship Support Service continues to go from strength from strength. Foster carers who take out a SGO continue to receive the support necessary from their supervising worker easing their transition.

Work continues to support a small number of looked after children through the Rehabilitation and Prevention Service (RAP). The service provides intensive therapeutic support for looked after children with support from experienced foster carers. The service is a partnership between the local authority, Health, CAMHS and Action for Children. The Service is split into two elements:

Children and young people referred to the RAP service all have severely disrupted and abusive backgrounds and their needs are among the most complex conceivable. The service provides intensive therapeutic support to the child/young person and their carers to stabilise their placement and encourage the development of healthy attachments for the individual children and develop their ability to regulate their emotions.

Practitioners also work alongside Social Workers and Education staff to develop positive plans for the future, promote positive contact with birth families and to support the child's access to and use of education. The aim of this service is to maximise the potential for positive future outcomes for this vulnerable group of children and young people who are at significant risk of developing mental health problems, drug and alcohol addictions, criminal pathways and social exclusion. Involvement in this service could continue as long as 18 months, or longer dependant on the needs of those involved.

The service deals with a huge range of referrals including behavioural management problems; anxiety and phobic issues; distress caused by parental separation; trauma from past neglect, abuse or exposure to domestic violence; children who are at risk of losing their place at home or with foster carers as a result of their challenging

behaviour. These interventions vary in length depending on the complexity of the case.

As part of the Council's commitment to enhance the Fostering service, the [Mockingbird](#) family model has been implemented. This model replicates an extended family in 'Constellations of 6-10 fostering households. Groups of Mockingbird Carers are called a Constellation. A Constellation comprises of 6 – 10 satellite Fostering Families who are supported by a Hub Home that is operated by an experienced Foster Carer and offers advice, training and peer support, planned and emergency sleepovers. It also facilitates positive relationships and visits for sibling groups who are in care, but not in the same care setting. Each constellation is supported by a Mockingbird Liaison Worker who provides support and a link between the Constellation and Fostering Service.

Therapeutic services within Mockingbird provide additionality, focusing on support for foster carers to discuss the children's behaviour directly with the therapist and receive support and develop strategies for meeting the holistic needs of the children.

Following the launch of the 1st constellation in January 2020, and the second in February 2021, a third constellation has now been established in November 2021, and supports 4 satellite families, comprising 8 looked after children, and 5 birth children.



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme

The 'Adaptations to Foster Carers' Homes' policy was introduced in 2020, supporting foster carers make necessary adaptations to their home to provide adequate space for children/young people. It supports; sibling placements, the needs of children with multiple disabilities, secure extra capacity for foster placements and to meet health and safety requirements which would otherwise result in a child being moved.

Funding compliments existing support and is a step forward in securing local and stable placements for children. Applications for grant funding will be considered up to £36,000, and £20,000 for relocation to a more suitable property. To access the grant, carers and social worker must first exhaust other options/resources.

Grants are also available to; existing or prospective adoptive families, family and friends/carers of children under a Special Guardianship Order and carers who are committed to their caring role for the long term, or at least until the child reaches 18.

## Rebalancing Local Residential Provision

Despite the commitment to prevention and early intervention, there will always be a small proportion of looked after children who need residential placements, and Social Services want to make sure that these children and young people can remain close to home.

Teams have continued work to meet objectives in providing local residential care within Flintshire, utilising funds from the young people's Transformation Programme. This also serves to meet Welsh Government's Programme for Government ambition to eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after through establishment of Local Authority provision.

### Tŷ Nyth

Tŷ Nyth in Mold is a property that has been acquired by Flintshire Council on behalf of Flintshire and Wrexham, and will provide short term residential accommodation for four children, plus one emergency room, for children aged 11 to 18 years.



Alongside the residential Care Team a specialist MST-FIT (Multi-Systemic Therapy Family Integrated Transition) Team will be on site to support young people accommodated at the service alongside their families. The Team will identify the issues which may present difficulties in order to plan a successful return home. This is the first provision of its type in Wales.

Whilst in the residential assessment centre, the residential team will work on a number of skills with the young people through an Integrated Treatment Model (ITM), including mindfulness, emotional regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness and Social Skills

The residential team will provide day to day support, care and supervision of the young person, including but not exclusive:

- ensuring they continue to attend their school and support them with homework;
- provide and cook their meals;
- support them in any contact they may have with family / carers;
- support the young person to stay safe both physically and mentally;
- provide any support the young person may require with meeting other professionals.

The residential team will also be responsible for the day to day running of the assessment centre, including but not exclusive:

- ensuring the policies and procedures are up to date and adhered to;
- the centre is adequately staffed 24 hours a day every day of the year;
- the building is kept secure and safe at all times;
- the building is kept clean and tidy, with adequate food and other provisions.

The property will be operational by November 2022, following registration.

## **Park Avenue**

Alongside the Tŷ Nyth site and being refurbished at the same time is a 4 bedded residential children's home for long term placements for young people from Flintshire. The property will be operational in November 2022, following registration.

## **Small Group Homes**

Bromfield Park offers care and support including accommodation for two young people between the ages of 8 years – 18 years and 3 months who are supported by Flintshire County Council. It is recognised that the young people who live at Bromfield Park are likely to have experienced trauma which may have impacted on their ability to manage their feelings and emotions, communicate their wants and needs effectively and to form positive attachments.

Young people living here will be supported to prepare for their future which might include a foster arrangement and/or independent living arrangement. The amount of time that young people will be living at Bromfield Park will vary depending on their age, needs and individual circumstances. This will be determined in their care plans and personal plans.

Following the assessment and understanding of the young person's care and support needs; the team will ensure that the appropriate care and support is put in place and available to all young people living at Bromfield Park. We believe that by providing young people with a clear care and support plan and co-produced personal plan, that fully and clearly reflects their individual needs, it will allow them the opportunity to explore, reflect upon and manage the impact that the trauma they have experienced has had on their social, emotional and cognitive development.

Refurbishment is well underway to provide two further small registered homes to accommodate children and young people from Flintshire who need long term residential care. The build programme is scheduled to be completed by the autumn of 2022. Indicatively we are seeking to commit to 6 small group homes over the next 3 years.

## **Accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers**

A 3 bedded Council property is being refurbished as accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. Support for residents will be provided externally by those with specialist skills and experience, sourced through the 4Cs Framework. This will be based on a Supported Living model. This property will be ready by the end of 2022, subject to RISCA registration.

## **Arosfa**

The Arosfa Short Breaks Service, delivered by Action for Children, offers short term residential breaks at regular defined intervals which include overnight, mid-week and weekend stays for children and young people with profound disabilities. Utilising funds from the Integrated Care Fund, an unused wing at Arosfa has been refurbished, and this has increased the service capacity

In April 2021 the refurbishment work at Arosfa was completed increasing the provision to 5 beds at Arosfa. These beds bring capacity to accommodate permanent long-term residents, and provide a quality local service as an alternative to out of county placements and again, meeting priority areas by working with third sector organisations to remove the profit from care services.

## **Unregulated Placements**

Whilst bringing enhanced local placement capacity, these developments are within the context of a national shortage of residential placements for children. We know that



across Wales there is a significant shortfall in placement sufficiency leading to unprecedented reliance on unregulated arrangements. It is important to emphasise that these arrangements are used as a last resort in emergency situations, due to exceptional circumstances and for a short period until a regulated provision can be sourced.

Locally we currently have a number of children supported in unregulated placements. We also have a sibling group of 4 children in regulated, out of county placements, who are at significant risk of losing their placements and require a bespoke provision to ensure placement stability and the delivery of positive support to their lives which currently feature behaviours of concern, vulnerability of exploitation and episodes of missing from care. The reality is that this sibling group require the immediate development of a bespoke provision/s in county.

The development of options for this sibling group forms part of a wider strategic approach to developing local provision that takes stock of the national and local context and aligns placement demand/need, sufficiency, accommodation, education, workforce, and finance/funding.

## 7 What Stakeholders Say

The Regional Partnership Board has established a Children & Young People Sub-Group. The Sub-Group will provide specific focus on the needs of C&YP, ensuring that their needs are understood fully and their views contribute towards setting future commissioning planning;

The 4Cs has an active Young Commissioners Group and undertakes regular consultation with C&YP with experience of being looked after. Young commissioners are involved in the selection of providers when the 4Cs tenders and in the ongoing quality monitoring of providers on the National Frameworks;

The North Wales Social Care and Well-being Services Improvement Collaborative has an 'Engagement Officer' in post. The Engagement Officers' role involves consultation with service users and their families / carers, partners and stakeholders (including commissioners and commissioned providers) to ensure that the views of individuals are heard and contribute towards commissioning of services.

Children's Social Services are proud to support the Young Voices Out Loud group, who continued to meet during the pandemic, although online. This group is made up of young people with lived experience of the care system. The group missed meeting as a group, and as restrictions have been lifted, they are now meeting face to face.

The group recently had a discussion about how young people are addressed in colleges and schools when tutors or teachers are discussing parental roles, and how it makes them feel. They have met with professionals from a number of agencies including Voices from Care and Tros Gynnal Plant Advocacy service as well as the Children Looked After Nurse and Volunteer Mentor Coordinator to offer more information on support that is available to them.

Young people from the group are also welcome to attend the Children's Services Forum, which opens up more opportunities for care experienced young people to make a difference to how services are delivered locally.

Children and Family and Safeguarding Services have identified a need to introduce a

more efficient method of consultation and engagement with our looked after children and young people consistent with how we believe that children and young people prefer to communicate.

Therefore, we are looking to procure an app-led suite of products and services that modernises the processes and systems used to gather the views of children and young people (up to 25) using social care services. The app will be used by staff, our looked after children and care leavers.

The App will promote and improve communication and understanding, will complement the more traditional methods of engagement with young people through group activities, forums and face to face meetings. Importantly, it will also provide an additional means of communication for children who are living in placements outside of Flintshire.

The North Wales Market Position Statement for children and young people's residential and fostering services (2021) provides recent feedback and discussion from stakeholders in North Wales.

The [North Wales Population Needs Assessment](#) (2022) has also gathered feedback from stakeholders of Children's services and provides an overview of services currently delivered across the region.

# SECTION 3

Refer to Plan Section within the Commissioning Strategy Guidance document for good practice suggestions and actions

## 8 Projection of Future Needs

There are a number of identified pressure points and ways that these can be supported. They are:

### Children age 10-18

Flintshire needs to develop some step down options for Children should their care and support needs decrease and be ready to explore at earlier stages a possible integration back into birth family, where it is safe to do so. Mostly, children wish to maintain strong ties with their immediate family and Flintshire must be sure to take adequate steps to make this a reality.

### Connected Persons

A robust service to support connected persons is essential to be developed. Flintshire recognises that in future connected persons will require robust training and support to help them maintain a placement and to keep a child within the family network. Flintshire will also need to support and encourage Special Guardianship Order's be undertaken and that support is in place to make the SGO's a continued success.

### Children at Crisis Point

Flintshire recognises that whilst in a placement, children can still come into crisis, and ensuring that there is contingency support should this be the case is crucial. The need for respite to be built into a care plan to support the maintenance of a placement and having carers that are adequately skilled in managing challenging cases and individuals. Flintshire County Council also recognize a growing trend in the number of children becoming looked after who are in their older teenage years and will take steps to meet this need but to also prevent situations escalating into crisis to begin with.

### Older Children

The trend of older children coming into local authority care is notable. Flintshire must ensure that Foster Carers are adequately trained to support these older children and that links are built with housing, education, and residential providers to meet this need.

### No Wrong Door

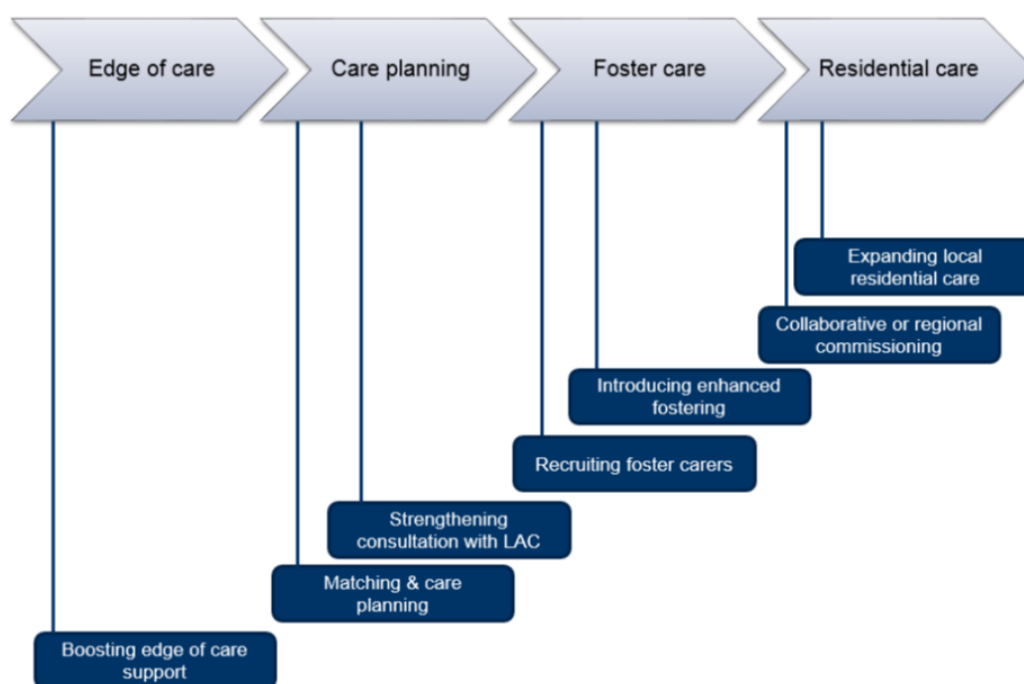
The Children's Commissioner for Wales has asked every region to adopt a 'No Wrong Door' commitment so that children and their families would not get bounced between services or get doors shut in their faces. Every Regional Partnership Board has a plan for children's provision, and has begun to make changes towards a No

Wrong Door approach.

The [NEST Framework](#) is a planning tool for Regional Partnership Boards that aims to ensure a 'whole system' approach for developing mental health, well-being and support services for babies, children, young people, parents, carers and their wider families across Wales. The NEST/NYTH framework includes No Wrong Door as one of its key principles. Boards have engaged positively with the new NEST / NYTH framework and all have a plan to work within this framework

## 9 Are Current Services Meeting the Needs?

The challenges in effectively managing demand and providing effective, appropriate support to meet the needs of children and families is clearly articulated in the 'Care Crisis Review'. The Review reflects that there is no single fix or 'silver bullet' to managing demand but there are core components that can, collectively, reduce the need for Residential Care. Research undertaken by Cordis Bright across 13 London local authorities in 2017 has summarised this continuum of support as having the following characteristics:



### Edge of care

**Support for families with children on the edge of care.** For example Flintshire will closely scrutinise decisions about whether older young people should be taken into care and, in particular, what difference can be achieved at this relatively late stage.

### Care Planning

**Improving matching and care planning.** For example Flintshire will look at improving care planning to anticipate and respond to possible placement breakdown and review the method of scrutiny of whether older children should be taken into care and whether it is realistic that significant improvements in protection and outcomes can be achieved through removal.

**Strengthening consultation with young people.** For example Flintshire will look at the area of consultation with looked after children about their placement. Focusing on ways that help identify areas for improvement for looked after children as a whole but also to provide earlier warning of any potential placement breakdown and respond proactively and pre-emptively.

## **Foster Care**

**Delivering** our Maethu Flintshire: Foster Flintshire Recruitment and Retention Strategy

### **Residential care**

**Regional working** Flintshire will work with North Wales local authorities to explore the options and benefits of developing a regional provision for children with complex needs.

Flintshire at present is meeting the needs of children and young people

- Flintshire to explore providing appropriate training and remuneration to Foster Carers in order to create capacity to support the needs of high risk individuals, to ensure closer proximity to supportive networks (education/peers etc.) and reduce cost of out of county placements.
- Current Service provision is aligned with Corporate Priorities to support well-being and ensure the individual is at the centre of the plan around them.
- Whilst there are examples of strong relationships with other organisations, both statutory and third sector, there is still considerable work needed to create strong relationships that can work collaboratively and effectively to meet the needs of the individual in a meaningful way. This includes cross boundary working (on both a Local Authority Scale and a National Scale)
- The Service follows closely the principles of the Social Services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and regularly reviews what matters to the individual who is receiving care and support to ensure that their personal outcomes are being met through the services that are delivered and the placement in which they reside.
- Performance is measured closely through regular audits of systems and panel meetings and LAC reviews. An amendment to current practice which has been received from the participation groups is to remodel LAC reviews to bring focus onto the child so that the review is happening 'for' the child and not 'to'.

## 10 Financial Analysis

The figures below indicate the costs for internal placement and external placement commissioning for the financial years from 2017/18 onwards.

<b>FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b><i>Internal Placement Costs</i></b>	<b><i>External Placement Costs - Out of County Expenditure</i></b>
2017-2018	2,685,241	5,135,514
2018-2019	2,702,137	5,161,096
2019-2020	2,827,923	6,881,497
2020-2021	2,843,270	8,273,704
2021-2022	2,633,642	9,393,621

The figures for placement costs illustrated above indicate the budget pressures within Children's services and highlight the significant increases in external placement costs in recent financial years. Flintshire are looking to invest and develop in-house service provision which is in accordance with the ethos of transitioning to a not-for-profit system. Although it is anticipated that this will be beneficial in terms of outcomes for individuals in receipt of services and associated stakeholders, any effect that this may have in terms of cost efficiencies and mitigating future budget pressures is difficult to accurately forecast.

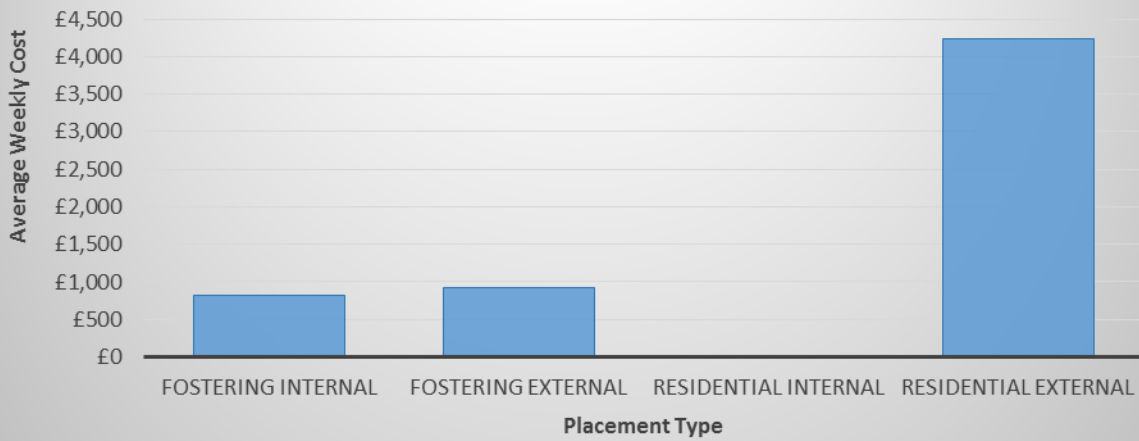
Spend for the external placement costs alone for the 2022/23 financial year is projected to be at least 6.2% higher than the figure for the 2021/22 financial year. It is acknowledged however that this forecast is projected on current known placements only and is based solely on data from Quarter 1 of the current financial year. Consequently, the rise in spend is likely to be considerably in excess of the current projected figure which creates both budget pressures and some degree of uncertainty in informing future budget planning requirements in the short term and also for the local authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The following charts indicate the average weekly costs of placements by placement type and whether services are commissioned internally or externally and also via framework or non-framework sources.

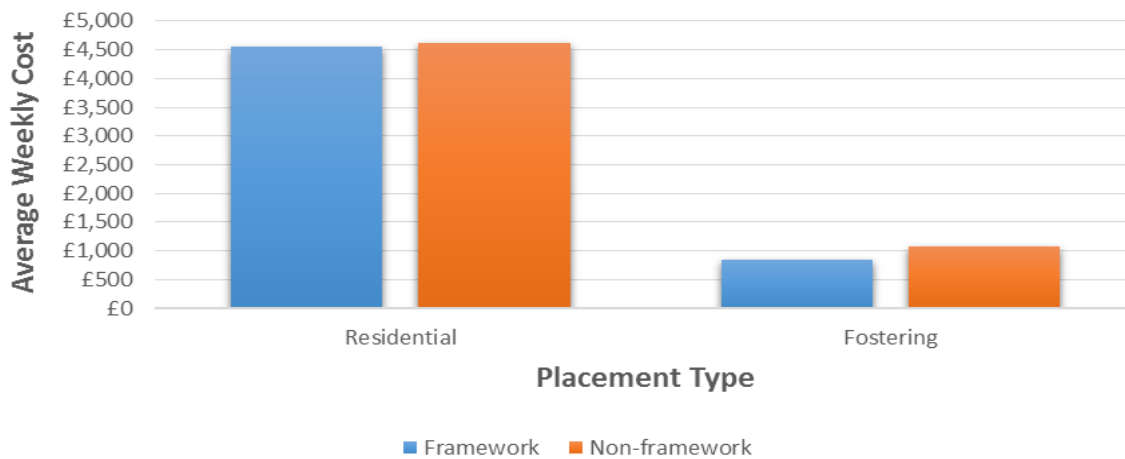
It should be noted that the data for the table for the cost of internal versus external costs relates to average costs for the 2021/22 financial year whereas the data for the framework versus non-framework costs represents a snapshot from March 2022. Data from earlier quarters of the same financial year indicate a larger disparity between framework and non-framework residential placements than that illustrated for the period in the graph below.

Data for both charts was sourced from the quarterly local authority returns for the 4C's QBDR summary data.

## Average weekly cost for 21/22 financial year (snapshot date - March 2022)



## Average weekly cost of placements for 21/22 financial year (Framework vs Non-Framework)



## 11 Gap Analysis

For the Regional Market Stability Report, the local authority identified the following market sufficiency issues:

- Need to meet the forecast demand with in-house foster carers
- Foster parents to support children in the age categories 10 to 14 and 15+
- Sourcing appropriate local placements for those with complex needs
- Meeting demand for children who need complex multi-agency care packages or have challenging risk management plans, example behaviours include anger management issues, verbal and physical aggression towards adults
- Shortages for sibling groups and children with disabilities
- Not enough skilled foster parents for children at the highest end of needs profile, those currently living in care homes
- Insufficient placements lead to children being placed in unregulated settings
- Not enough carers who speak Welsh
- North Wales has a shortage of parent and child places, especially in Wrexham and Flintshire

Flintshire along with other local authorities have experienced that a lack of supply in local residential care means that providers were often able to 'pick and choose' which children and young people they support. There is often a reluctance to take children and young people with complex needs and behavioural challenges. This may be due to a number of reasons including the lack of skill/expertise, a concern about how behaviour might impact other residents and the local community, and worries that all of this might impact on their inspection judgement.

Alongside this, the capacity of the workforce presents a risk. The challenges with social care recruitment are well versed and reflected in recent efforts to recruit to our developing in-house provision. The approach is to recruit based on aptitude, values, and potential, as opposed to direct experience. This does create risks which are likely to compound as we extend our provision at a time when neighbouring authorities will start to expedite their own plans to expand in-house provision and the associated workforce expansion. There will be an increasingly competitive market. Demand for staff for children's residential services, especially Residential Managers will be in high demand, with local authorities paying different rates.

In order to operate the in-house provision as outlined in this document, 33 residential staff are required. Alongside the time taken to recruit, additional time is needed to develop these new staff and support them through a wealth of training to enable us to develop a quality service. Whilst incurring this additional expense, the local authority will still be funding the current cohort of placements, resulting in budget pressures.

The Council are also mindful of the risk that the new resources will have on the current sector, in that there may be movement between private and local authority provision. There is a need to work collectively and collaboratively to ensure businesses remain viable businesses, and placements are still made with local providers to prevent destabilisation

Given the Council's ambitious plans, investment will need to be made in building Responsible Individual capacity. Flintshire is in a current period of expansion in other areas of social care, including in-house residential care for older people and Extra



Care. With these new services coming online, additional capacity will need to be considered to meet the need of the growing children's residential provision alongside this.

The Council are in the early stages of exploring residential educational provision for children with physical and learning disabilities. This will provide an offer local to home, which is currently not available. Learning has been taken from across North Wales to develop a business case to take this forward. Alongside this, there is scope to explore additional options for young people with Learning Disabilities post-16 through existing partnerships with third sector organisations. The accommodation needs to this cohort will also need consideration of whether there is a local educational option to out of county residential college.

There are further educational considerations. We need to ensure that as more children and young people with complex needs will be accommodated closer to home, that there is appropriate educational provision in place to meet their needs. The need to review the range and capacity of specialist educational provision across the authority has been identified by the Education & Youth Portfolio and as such, has been included as an ongoing priority area within the Council Improvement Plan. To inform the requirements, a review and feasibility study were commissioned to provide information regarding the level and areas of need for specialist provision and potential options to address these.

The review identified the following:

- A shortfall in provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)
- A shortfall in specialist provision for pupils with Autism
- A need for additional capacity within the existing specialist schools to meet the level of demand
- A specialist Resourced Base provision for a small number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- A shortfall in residential provision for pupils with additional learning needs

In response to the review, the Council has invested £6m in the development of a purpose built facility for pupils with BESD. Plas Derwen pupil referral unit (PRU) opened in September 2021 providing a specialist setting for a greater number of Flintshire pupils. Flintshire is one of only two councils nationally to have made a significant investment in their PRU facilities in recent years, offering an improved learning environment for some of our most vulnerable pupils.

A feasibility study has been completed to outline the potential options for the Council to address the other identified shortfalls in provision. A range of options have been identified and these proposals will now be considered as part of the Council's strategic development of its educational provision.



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# SECTION 4

Refer to Plan and Deliver Section within the Commissioning Strategy Guidance document for good practice suggestions and actions

## 13 Commissioning Intentions

### Mockingbird

Following the successful development of 3 Mockingbird constellations, a further (4<sup>th</sup>) provision will be developed.

### Training for Foster carers

There is need to commission and develop robust packages of support for Foster Carers who are caring for children with complex needs. Adequate training and support for carers is paramount to Flintshire so that we can provide appropriate, loving and supportive care to those children who have the most complex needs in an environment most similar to a family home.

### Residential Provision

Having care facilities and placements delivered by registered providers both locally and in the region of North Wales is a strong intention for Flintshire going forward. If additional funding is available then there is a clear commitment to extend the development of Small Group Homes over the next 3 years.

Work is also developing on a provision to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) as the authority has been allocated 10 children through the initial phases of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) that will require support as looked after children. This number is likely to increase as part of national allocations through the Home Office.

### Edge of Care

Flintshire want to invest in children who are deemed to be on the edge of care. This support will ensure that children do not necessarily become looked after due to inadequate support that may prevent care and support needs escalating to a point beyond the immediate family's ability to maintain the child. This will also ensure that Flintshire will be aware that those who do become looked after will come into care with more intensive and complex needs that we can support accordingly. This edge of care support will also look at commissioning short periods of care on a temporary basis where necessary so that appropriate work can be done to facilitate ongoing family reunification.

### RI Capacity

With these new services being developed, additional capacity will be needed to meet the need of the growing children's residential provision alongside development in adult's services.

### Advocacy

Development and focus on advocacy for parents as part of the national service development.

### The voice of children and young people

The Council are to commission an App to support feedback from children and young people in receipt of services

	Outcome Desired	Action	Performance Measure	How will we do this	Who will do this	Timescales
1	Keep more Children living locally.	Increase the proportion of foster care provision within Flintshire County Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of foster carers residing within the Local Authority area.</li> <li>• % of CLA in foster placements within the Local Authority.</li> <li>• Target reduction in the number of foster placements provided out of area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and improve foster care recruitment strategy</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for regional commissioning for specialist areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering Manager</li> <li>• NFF Regional Lead</li> </ul>	TBD
2	Develop Registered Provision locally.	Develop robust provision for looked after children within Flintshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Commissioning guidance.</li> <li>• Increase in capacity for local placements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the 'Mockingbird' model in Flintshire.</li> <li>• Develop small group homes scheme.</li> <li>• Develop Assessment Centre</li> <li>• Develop provision for unaccompanied Asylum Seekers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborations and Business Relations Officer.</li> <li>• Fostering Manager</li> <li>• Senior Manager, Children's Services.</li> </ul>	TBD

3	Providers are able to 'Meet the commissioner' and develop close links with Flintshire.	Create strong relationships with a wide and varied range of residential/specialist foster placement providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of providers Flintshire are aware of and can engage with.</li> <li>• Number of events run by Flintshire to facilitate engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run events for providers to meet with Flintshire Commissioners.</li> <li>• Review existing partnerships with providers.</li> <li>• Ensure Flintshire has a robust market position statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering and Permanence Teams</li> <li>• Collaborations and Business Relations Officer.</li> </ul>	TBD
4	Support other North Wales Local Authorities.	Work across a regional footprint to pool resources and work closely with other authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce Collaborative work streams with other LA's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a regional work programme</li> <li>• Engage in National Fostering Framework principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NFF Regional Lead</li> </ul>	TBD
5	Out of county placements.	Implement Out of County Placements in an effective way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in number of out of county placements</li> <li>• Out of county placements are stable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete detailed market research where possible before commissioning and Out of County Placement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of County Panels (Education/Health/Social Services)</li> <li>• Collaborations and Business Relations Officer.</li> </ul>	TBD
6	Children able to live safely with immediate families.	Decrease need for number of placements outside of the family unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of children living with immediate families, with LA support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with families and children to develop safety plans.</li> <li>• Include RAP where necessary</li> <li>• Implement short term placement plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering and permanence Teams</li> </ul>	TBD

7	Children on the Edge of Care are supported.	Children potentially becoming looked after receive timely and effective support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in number of children becoming looked after</li> <li>• Assessments noting that children are at risk of becoming looked after early on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective training for staff and support workers.</li> <li>• Targeted intervention and working closely with what matters to the child.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children Services Frontline Staff</li> <li>• Fostering Teams</li> </ul>	TBD
8	Flintshire have a wide and varied range of support available/	Develop innovative approaches to delivering support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in bespoke packages of care for looked after children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Positive behavioural support training and approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering Teams</li> <li>• Foster Carers/ Residential Providers.</li> </ul>	TBD
9	Care Leavers are safe.	Care Leavers have access to appropriate accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children report being better equipped for adult life.</li> <li>• Care leavers able to access safe and affordable housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend housing support to 16-years-old, taking an early intervention approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Services Senior Manager</li> <li>• Housing Managers</li> <li>• Supported Living Staff</li> </ul>	TBD
10	Looked after children have a voice in the delivery of their care and placement choice.	Engage with individuals Use co-productive approach throughout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better lines of communication between children and decision makers.</li> <li>• Children are central to the process throughout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaged looked after children through a variety of forums and methods</li> <li>• Bring looked after children to professional meetings where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation Officer.</li> <li>• Social Work staff.</li> </ul>	TBD

# Appendix 1

The following factors are always considered by Flintshire County Council when making placements;

- Is the placement in the best interests of the child?
- Can the placement meet the needs of the child as set out in their care and support plan, and subsequent pathway plan?
- Does the placement support continuity in the child's education or training?
- Is the provision not for profit / Third Sector?
- Does the placement enable the child to live together with any siblings who are also being looked after by the local authority?
- That the placement will support positive contact arrangements with family and known support network;
- That arrangements are made to spend time with friends and maintain sporting, social and leisure pursuits.
- If a child is placed outside of immediate family members, is the placement within a reasonable proximity to immediate family, with safety considered at all times.

It is also vital that Flintshire County Council consider;

- The views, wishes and feelings of the child (in accordance with the child's age and understanding);
- The views, wishes and feelings of parents or other person with parental responsibility (as appropriate);
- The child's religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background
- The child's sexuality and gender identity;
- Does the child have any additional needs or sensory impairment, including any emotional, behavioural and mental health needs?

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn bwrpasol



# Eitem ar gyfer y Rhaglen 6



## JOINT EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Report Subject</b>	Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language and Culture
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer Education & Youth
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides an overview of the duties placed on the Council by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET) and an update of the activity undertaken by the Council and its schools in the third year of implementation.

The report also provides an overview of the services provided by the Inclusion & Progression Service to support children with Additional Learning Needs, in particular those with Autism.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members recognise the revised duties placed on the Council by ALNET and the actions undertaken to implement the new system.
2	Members note the potential financial pressures due to the legislative requirements.

## REPORT DETAILS

1.00	<b>Explaining the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018</b>
1.01	<p>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, known as ALNET, seeks to create a unified system for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) from 0 to aged 25. The Act brings together several separate systems and legislation into one for those who access their education in schools, pupil referral units, via elective home education or in further education institutes (FEIs).</p> <p>An important distinction between the old and new systems is that ALNET brings with it legal protection for all those within the ALN process, unlike previous legislation where it was restricted to those with a Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN). This applies to pre-school children and also young people over compulsory school age up to the age of 25. Under ALNET, children and young people identified with ALN, will have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which captures their individual needs and the additional learning provision (ALP) required to meet these. This is a legal document and replaces all previous SEN documentation. Young people also now have the right to object to the Council making an assessment of ALN or the drafting of an IDP, assuming they have not been identified as lacking capacity to do so. Both parents and children/young people have the right to appeal to the Education Tribunal in relation to an assessment for ALN and also the ALP that has been identified.</p>
1.02	<p>The implementation of ALNET commenced in September 2021 with children and young people being gradually transitioned from the old to the new system; during this period, schools and councils have had to administer the two systems in parallel. Initially, Welsh Government planned for a 3-year implementation programme but this has been extended to allow for a further 12 months in light of the workload associated with the transition. Schools and officers have welcomed this extension given the number of Statements held by the authority. For the academic year 2023/24, the ALN Team planned to convert 289 Statements of SEN to IDPs. To date, 251 are either completed or in process leaving a further 38 to complete before the end of the year. Any cases that are not completed will have their IDP notices issued and the process will continue and be completed in the following academic year.</p> <p>For the academic year 2024/25, there are a further 174 Statements of SEN (pupils in years 4,5 &amp; 9) to be converted. The ALN Team anticipate that these will be completed within the designated timescales (assuming a full team complement and minimal absence). This will see all Statements converted by August 2025, 830 in total.</p> <p>The level of Statement conversion has been a significant achievement by schools and particularly the ALN Team who attended all conversion meetings in the first year to ensure schools and parents felt supported in this process. This ensured that there was a very clear and consistent message in relation to ALNET at all meetings. This approach, whilst challenging from a workload and capacity perspective, served to be time well spent, with schools developing their knowledge and confidence in working through the conversion process and parents feeling supported leading to a reduced level of escalation to the Council.</p>

1.03	<p>Schools continue to develop their processes in response to ALNET. Person-centred practice is a positive development of the legislation and this is more evident in schools. The direct focus on the child along with delegated funding, allows schools to make decisions about the ALP that a child needs to meet their ALN. Previously this would have been determined by the Council based on reports and information submitted to the Moderation Panel as opposed to the process under ALNET where it is based on the school's knowledge and understanding of the child's needs.</p> <p>A review of Estyn reports of inspections which have taken place during the implementation period show a positive picture in the main for Flintshire schools and the support that has been provided by officers. Where there has been a recommendation linked to ALN, officers are working with the schools to address the matters identified.</p>
1.04	<p>Estyn has undertaken a thematic review of the implementation of ALNET and all councils have contributed to that via their local inspector. The review identified a number of recommendations for Welsh Government, councils and schools. A Flintshire action plan was drafted in response to the recommendations and reflects our actions in relation to both the Council and school recommendations. A series of meetings have been undertaken with Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos) and headteachers to ensure awareness of the recommendations and appropriate actions in response. A second review has recently commenced by Estyn to further consider implementation of the Act and progress made in relation to the first review.</p>
1.05	<p>The Welsh Government has also commissioned a longitudinal research project on ALNET to look at implementation and the impact of the legislative changes. The project will run for four years and Flintshire has been selected as one of the six councils to contribute this year. The process involves interviews with a number of key officers and also schools; these have been selected at random by the research company with no knowledge or involvement from the Council. All comments will be anonymous and schools are being encouraged to engage with this process to ensure that information about both the positive elements and ongoing challenges related to ALNET are fed back to WG.</p>
1.06	<p>Under ALNET, the Council has specific responsibilities for making decisions around appropriate post 16 educational provision, specifically for young people where specialist placements are required. Previously, Careers Wales held the responsibility to assess need and to draft a Learning &amp; Skills Plan which would outline the individual's needs and inform post-16 decision making. They had a duty to explore and discount all local options prior to making a request to WG for funding for placement at independent special post 16 institutions (ISPIs). WG would then consider the request and decide whether to support it or not.</p> <p>Under the new legislation, responsibility to assess individual need for specialist provision has now moved to the Council. The Council's ALN officer for Post 16 leads on the process and is working closely with schools and providers at a local level and also engages with other post 16 leads at a regional and national level. Whilst the responsibility for determining and agreeing ISPI placements has transferred to the Council, WG are continuing</p>

	<p>to fund the provision. Work continues at Welsh Government level to finalise the formula for the allocation of funding for post 16 learners.</p> <p>Considerable concern had been expressed from Flintshire and a number of other councils in North Wales that the proposed model didn't accurately reflect the level of presenting need which would result in increased financial pressure on the Council. WG officials have engaged with the affected councils and agreed to review the model. A report was commissioned and completed by the North Wales authorities to highlight the local position and this is being considered by WG.</p>
1.07	<p>ALNET places a requirement on Councils to make additional learning provision (ALP) available through the medium of Welsh. The legislation allows for reasonable adjustment at present, but councils have been advised that this could change making it a mandatory requirement. Flintshire has a number of specialist provision settings available to learners, but currently only one is Welsh medium. This means that pupils either transfer to English medium provision or Welsh medium provision in other counties is commissioned. Officers have engaged with our Welsh medium schools to consider the provision available and identify possible options in response to the findings.</p>
1.08	<p>Similar to other authorities, Flintshire is seeing an increase in the need for additional support for children with a neurodivergent (ND) profile, in particular, those with Autism. A budget pressure had been submitted to support the recruitment of a lead officer for the Education &amp; Youth Portfolio and the Learning Adviser Autism role was appointed to in February 2023. The postholder leads on providing support, advice and guidance to schools in relation to their practice both in terms of educational content and delivery with a particular focus on the learning environment. Training and awareness raising across Flintshire schools is a key part of the role.</p> <p>The officer also manages a team of two Inclusion Outreach Support workers who provide direct support and intervention to children, staff and families. Additional support, advice and training is provided through the Education Psychology Service. Flintshire also has specialist Resource bases at both primary and secondary level, which provide access to more specialist intervention within a mainstream setting. Our specialist schools have high numbers of children with Autism and Plas Derwen pupil referral unit is also developing its provision to meet the needs of pupils with an ND profile.</p>
1.09	<p>One of the challenges impacting on children and families is the waiting time for ND assessment. These assessments are undertaken by health professionals and children in the East (Wrexham and Flintshire), have waiting times generally in excess of 3 years.</p> <p>ALNET does not have a requirement for a clinical diagnosis before a child can access ALP and appropriate intervention should be made for all children identified as having ALN, however for some children and families, a formal diagnosis is important. Flintshire has worked as part of the regional Neurodivergent Improvement Project (NDIP) which is a collaboration between the health board and the six councils. The project is funded by WG and money has been secured by Flintshire to enhance the support for children on the waiting list.</p>

	<p>Through this funding, a teacher has been seconded to work across health and education, targeting children between years 6 and 9. The aim of the post is to provide support, advice and guidance to both schools and families and enable the pupil to maintain their mainstream educational placement. The project commenced in January 2024 and has been positively received, building stronger links across health and education and providing welcome support for schools and families. The funding has been extended and the project will run until April 2025. The success has led to a further bid across Flintshire and Wrexham being submitted to increase the capacity of this project.</p>
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<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	<p>The implementation of ALNET remains a workload challenge to both schools and the Council. Concerns have been flagged with WG around the implications on school Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCos) in terms of time required to deliver person-centred practice along with the administrative burden associated with the legislation. Schools receive grant funding from WG to support implementation and this is targeted at enabling ALNCos to complete their role. The Council also receives grant funding to support implementation and this is being used to fund the post 16 post within the ALN Team. WG have identified funding for ALN as an ongoing priority but it is unclear at this point how long the grant will continue for so this is a potential financial risk for the Council.</p>
2.02	<p>Schools are reporting that meeting the needs of their pupils, including those with ALN, is becoming a considerable challenge. Officers work closely with schools to review the provision being made and consider alternative delivery models/strategies to maximise the use of the available funding. Flintshire schools are becoming increasingly creative to adapt their provision and secure positive outcomes for all learners, but the financial challenges remain. Officers are engaging with headteachers to get a better understanding of the level of financial pressure associated with meeting their statutory duties in relation to ALN.</p>

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	<p>Impact assessment is not required as the report is for information only.</p>
3.02	<p>Flintshire has representation at a number of forums to raise any concerns in relation to ALNET including the Association of Directors of Education in Wales, (ADEW), the ADEW Finance sub-group and the National ALN Steering Group to ensure the impact is clearly understood and to influence decision making.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	None carried out as part of this report.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	None

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	Welsh Government Website - <i>Additional Learning Needs</i> <a href="https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-special-educational-needs">https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-special-educational-needs</a>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	Contact Officer: Jeanette Rock Senior Manager Inclusion & Progression Telephone: 01352 704017 E-mail: <a href="mailto:jeanette.rock@flintshire.gov.uk">jeanette.rock@flintshire.gov.uk</a>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
	<p><b>Additional learning needs (ALN) :</b> Section 2 of ALNET defines ALN as -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A person has additional learning needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision.</li> <li>2) A child of compulsory school age or person over that age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or</li> <li>b) has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or mainstream institutions in the further education sector</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) A child under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she is, or would be if no additional learning provision were made, likely to be within subsection (2) when of compulsory school age.</li> <li>4) A person does not have a learning difficulty or disability solely because the language (or form of language) in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been used at home.</li> </ol>

**Additional Learning Provision:** Section 3 of ALNET defines the term ‘additional learning provision’ (ALP), as -

- 1) “Additional learning provision” for a person aged three or over means educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age in -
  - a) mainstream maintained schools in Wales,
  - b) mainstream institutions in the further education sector in Wales, or
  - c) places in Wales at which nursery education is provided.
- 2) “Additional learning provision” for a child aged under three means educational provision of any kind.
- 3) In subsection (1), “nursery education” means education suitable for a child who has attained the age of three but is under compulsory school age.

**Young person:** for the purposes of ALNET and the ALN Code, a young person means a person over compulsory school age but under the age of 25.

**The Association of Directors in Wales (ADEW):** ADEW is the professional group of local authority officers accountable for statutory education functions in each of the local authorities in Wales. There are a number of ADEW sub groups including a finance group attended by lead education finance officers.

**National Additional Learning Needs Steering Group:** A national group established by WG to oversee and inform the implementation of ALNET. Membership includes representation from ADEW, Inclusion officers, ESTYN, Education Wales Tribunal, National Leadership Academy and Health alongside WG representatives.

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# Eitem ar gyfer y Rhaglen 7



## JOINT EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Report Subject</b>	Period Dignity Update
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language & Culture
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide Members with an overview of the current national position regarding period dignity and how grant funding has been of benefit to Flintshire schools and communities in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members receive the report on period dignity and be assured that the grant funding has been appropriately spent and has helped to meet the needs of those targeted by this Welsh Government initiative.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING PERIOD DIGNITY AND PERIOD PROUD</b>
1.01	Period dignity is about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respect - removing any stigma and shame around periods.</li><li>• Education - helping people understand that periods are normal and healthy.</li><li>• Equality - making sure everyone has what they need to manage their periods, and no-one faces period poverty.</li></ul>

	<p>No-one should be disadvantaged because they have periods. Everyone should have access to period products, as and when they need them - although unfortunately this is not always the case.</p> <p>Period Proud is about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone in Wales being treated equally and with respect. No-one should be held back or stopped from reaching their goals because they have a period.</li> </ul>
1.02	<p><b>A Period Proud Wales</b></p> <p>In February 2023 the Welsh Government outlined its approach to ensuring period dignity in Wales by publishing the Period Proud Wales Action Plan. The plan sets out our ambitions to eradicate period poverty and ensure period dignity for women, girls and people who have periods, by 2027.</p> <p>Welsh Government want to end the stigma and shame associated with periods. The action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sets out a vision for period dignity and the eradication of period poverty.</li> <li>• considers what period dignity means across a person's lifetime.</li> <li>• looks at periods and health, the environment, the workplace and sport and culture.</li> </ul>
1.03	<p><b>Welsh Government Period Dignity Grant Funding</b></p> <p>The criteria for the 2022-23 and 2023-2024 funding was for period products to be made available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all learners in all schools, free of charge and accessible in the most practical and dignified way possible</li> <li>• those who menstruate, from low-income households, free of charge and accessible in the most practical and dignified way possible.</li> </ul> <p>In 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, Flintshire committed to providing a minimum of 70% of the total amount spent on period products to be used to purchase eco-friendly period products (i.e. re-usable products and/or plastic free).</p> <p><i>Note - Welsh Government intend to increase this to 90%-100% of all products bought under the period dignity grant to be plastic-free, made with reduced plastic or reusable by 2026.</i></p>
1.04	<p><b>Period Proud Flintshire Steering Group</b></p> <p>A Period Proud Flintshire Steering Group has been established this year with representatives from the authority and community. Members of the steering group have reflected on the funding offer, explored further opportunities to raise awareness among communities and are developing a Flintshire Period Proud Action Plan which is in its initial stages.</p>

1.05	<p><b>Schools</b></p> <p>In Flintshire for 2022-23 and 2023-2024 all primary and secondary schools were provided with a proportion of grant funding to purchase period products to ensure they had a consistent supply available which was accessible by any learner who needs them. Funding was allocated in autumn term 2022 and autumn term 2023 to 66 primary schools, 13 secondary schools – including special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).</p> <p>Funding was calculated based on the number of females in each school. The total grant percentage was weighted 70% to secondary schools and 30% primary schools using Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data for Sept 2022 and PLASC 2023 data accordingly. Guidelines for purchasing products were shared with schools maintaining records of all orders made.</p>
1.06	<p><b>Community</b></p> <p>During 2022-2023 ongoing partnership working with community outlets enabled a proportion of the funding to be allocated to ensure 9 Foodbanks, 15 Adult Community Learning Centres, 10 Youth Clubs and 2 drop-in session locations for refugees, were fully stocked with free period products to assist those most in need.</p> <p>During 2023-2024 this expanded further to ensure 9 Foodbanks, 15 Adult Community Learning Centres, 16 Community Hubs, 7 Libraries and 4 Leisure centres were able to offer free period products. All outlets have also been promoting reusable period products.</p>
1.07	<p><b>Online Ordering 2022-2023</b></p> <p>Alongside the above offer to schools and communities, we have commissioned different suppliers to deliver period products direct to homes of girls and young women aged 8-18 years, providing they attended a school in Flintshire (including those who are electively home educated).</p> <p>In 2022-2023 Hey Girls (a Scottish community interest company) were commissioned to deliver period products direct to homes of girls and young women aged 8-18 years in Flintshire following a pilot the previous year. These included reusable and disposable products.</p>
1.08	<p>Reusable period products are washable products such as period pants, cloth pads and menstrual silicone cups which can be reused. These are the eco-friendly choice which do not contain plastic.</p> <p>Disposable period products are single use products such as tampons, panty liners and sanitary towels. A pack of sanitary towels can contain up to 5 plastic bags. Increasing the uptake of reusable period products can help reduce waste and lessen landfill.</p>
1.09	<p>Either the young people themselves, or the parents on their behalf, could choose the products for delivery from environmentally friendly options on a dedicated Hey Girls web page. All learners were checked centrally in Education &amp; Youth to confirm they were on roll in a Flintshire school before</p>

	<p>their orders were processed and a 3-month supply was delivered with discrete packaging.</p> <p>Online ordering was promoted via the Council's website and through social media. All schools were given appropriate information to share with their learners and families about the campaign, which in turn would reach those in underserved communities.</p>
1.10	<p>A total of 1890 orders were received within the 3-month period. Period pants were the most popular reusable product and daytime pads were the most popular disposable product.</p> <p>The benefit of this approach enabled young people to select products of their choice and receive them discreetly. There were no large stocks of products occupying storage spaces in schools not being utilised.</p>
1.11	<p><b>Online Ordering 2023-2024</b></p> <p>In response to the increased number of reusable products ordered by young people with Hey Girls and feedback from young people that some schools did not routinely stock reusable products, we explored a different approach. Grace and Green (a certified B Corporation company) were commissioned to deliver reusable only period products via online ordering, direct to homes of girls and young women aged 8-18 years (we did not offer single use disposable products). This pilot ran throughout March 2024 following a very similar process as delivered in previous years.</p> <p>A total of 1814 orders were received in March 2024. This equated to the following products delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3009 reusable period pants</li> <li>• 2960 reusable period pads</li> <li>• 219 menstrual cups and pods</li> </ul> <p>Again, period pants were the most popular product. There has also been a large increase in the number of menstrual cups ordered compared to the previous year.</p>
1.12	<p><b>Education</b></p> <p>During 2022-2023 the first dedicated period products training was offered to Flintshire schools, focusing on both reusable and disposable products. Four workshops were delivered attended by 17 school staff and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.</p> <p>Feedback from the steering group highlighted the need to equip community staff with the knowledge and skills needed to have supportive period product conversations.</p> <p>Building on this in 2023-2024, a broader offer of training and education was co-ordinated with 10 parents and carers trained, 104 learners, 19 school staff and 16 community staff.</p>

1.13	<p><b>Menstrual Health Education</b></p> <p>A small group of parent/carers also attended a menstrual health education training session focusing on understanding symptoms of periods, supporting a young person with periods, and an overview of products available. The session has highlighted that understanding the day-to-day impact of periods and their symptoms is important to support the individual as well as raising awareness on Period Dignity across other provisions.</p>
1.14	<p><b>2024-25 Period Dignity Grant</b></p> <p>The Welsh Government have confirmed Flintshire's grant allocation on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (£132,821) and planning is well underway to build on the education offer to parents and community and aim to achieve the target of 100% plastic-free, made with reduced plastic or reusable products purchased with the funding.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	Should the grant funding reduce or cease this would not only have an impact on the local authority's ability to offer a provision of free products to schools and communities, but it would also impact on staffing.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	The grant funding must be claimed in full by 30 April 2025. Any unclaimed part of the funding will cease to be available to the authority.
3.02	Funding must meet the criteria and reporting requirements as stipulated by Welsh Government.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	None.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>Welsh Government Period Proud Wales Action Plan</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.wales/period-proud-wales-action-plan-html#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20Period,%2Dranging%2C%20holistically%20intersecting%20actions.">https://www.gov.wales/period-proud-wales-action-plan-html#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20Period,%2Dranging%2C%20holistically%20intersecting%20actions.</a></p>

6.02	The Curriculum for Wales – Relationships and Sexuality Education Code <a href="https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/curriculum-for-wales-relationships-sexuality-education-code.pdf">https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/curriculum-for-wales-relationships-sexuality-education-code.pdf</a>
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<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
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7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Emma McIntyre, Healthy Schools and Preschools Officer  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704057  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Emma.McIntyre@flintshire.gov.uk">Emma.McIntyre@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Claire Sinnott, Learning Advisor – Health, Wellbeing &amp; Safeguarding  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704054  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Claire.h.sinnott@flintshire.gov.uk">Claire.h.sinnott@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>
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<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
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	<p><b>Period Dignity</b>  Period dignity is about respect, education, and equality. Removing any stigma and shame around periods, helping people understand that periods are normal and healthy and making sure everyone has what they need to manage their periods and no-one faces period poverty.</p> <p><b>Certified B Corporations, or B Corps</b>  Certified B Corporations, or B Corps, are companies verified by B Lab to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.</p> <p><b>RSE</b>  Relationships and Sexuality Education</p> <p><b>PLASC</b>  Pupil Level Annual School Census</p>
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