

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 15 th June 2021
Report Subject	Developing In House Residential Care for Children
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council (Partnerships) and Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The council is committed to ensuring children and young people receive high quality care so they are, and feel, safe, loved and supported to develop the skills and resilience to lead fulfilled lives.

Our main aim is to support families to care for their own children, and to prevent them, if safe to do so, from becoming looked after. This is what the majority of families want and where most children will best achieve their potential.

Where children need to be looked after we want to ensure that we can make suitable and timely placements. However, there are significant challenges with placement sufficiency. As an authority we are reliant on the independent sector for Children's Residential Care provision. This provision is very expensive and often in placements that are out of area. This has led to children being placed away from their communities at an increasing, and unsustainable, financial cost to the local authority. As a Corporate Parent this is not what we want for our children.

To secure change we have set a commitment to develop our own Residential Care Home provision for children and young people. This paper proposes the priorities for the next three financial years through the delivery of the following projects:

1. Arosfa: to support a growing number of disabled children and their parents/carers
2. Ty Nyth: to provide specialist therapeutic assessment and support
3. Emergency Provision: to enable an effective response to crisis situations
4. Small Group Homes: to enable children to live within their local community

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Members support the move to become a direct provider of Residential Care for Children
2	The following 4 projects are agreed as the priority projects for in House development: Arosfa, Ty Nyth, Emergency Provision, Small Group Homes

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING REBALANCING THE RESIDENTIAL MARKET FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
1.01	<p>In August 2020 ADSS Cymru published a report which examined the case for rebalancing social care provision in Children's Services. The reports identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.• The current level of dependency on private residential care provision must be reduced. A small number of local authorities have taken, or are taking, steps to do this but action is needed, locally and / or regionally, in all areas. It will require considerable, and co-ordinated, action and investment.• The development of more short-term assessment, emergency and crisis accommodation will help to address one of the major problems supporting private provider dominance i.e. the urgency or desperation to find any placement, which can compromise the ability to find right match for a child's needs• 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 re-balancing must be to develop stable, resilient markets, which offer options and choice, quality care, fewer placement breakdowns, and good outcomes for children.• Reducing cost is an acceptable goal of rebalancing. However, driving down costs and 'the cheapest option is best' must not be the prime objectives. Quality care and good outcomes must come first.
1.02	<p>Building on the findings on ADSS Cymru, this report articulates the approach we will be taking to rebalance children's social care in Flintshire, placing children, and the delivery of high quality outcomes, at the forefront of our ambition.</p>
	Whole System Approach
1.03	<p>It is important that the development of in house residential Children's Care Home is seen as part of a whole system approach to supporting children and young people. This involves a number of complimentary projects to:</p>

1.04	<p><u>Reduce the number of children looked after by:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. strengthening edge of care provision to support children safely and appropriately at home and prevent them needing to enter the formal looked after care system 2. working to revoke court orders to ensure that children who no longer need to be in care can safely exit the care system 3. developing our support package for Special Guardianship arrangements in line with the financial and support arrangements for foster carers
1.05	<p><u>Support more children through local authority fostering by:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. attracting more general foster carers through a Methu Wales/Foster Wales campaign 2. expanding our Mockingbird Hub model
	<p>Service Objectives</p>
1.06	<p>The objectives of our approach to providing Residential Care will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a supply of high quality local placements • Provide a safe and secure environment that promotes the well-being of looked after children who have complex needs • Provide the right level of specialised support and care for the child, working in partnership with education and health teams to improve their outcomes. • Support looked after children to sustain and build positive local connects with family, friends and their community • Support children to develop the skills and resilience to lead fulfilled lives with seamless well organised transition arrangements and support as they become young care leavers.
	<p>Project One: Arosfa</p>
1.07	<p>Arosfa is a well-established service providing short term breaks / respite for children with disabilities. Provided in a local authority the service is run for the local authority by Action for Children. Through Council capital funding an unused wing at Arosfa has been refurbished to provide 2 additional bed spaces at the facility. This enhances the capacity of Arosfa to support 5 children at any one time.</p>
1.08	<p>The model that we will use for the new beds at Arosfa is being developed to respond to the identified needs to the current cohort of children. Options being explored include long term placements and an innovative model of 'shared care' working with parents to sustain family arrangements.</p>
1.09	<p>The building and refurbishment work is scheduled for completion at the end of April 2021. A phased approach will be taken to expand support at Arosfa with introductions and arrangements developed to respond to the individual needs of the identified children who will be supported in the new wing. Our timelines and processes will need to be informed by COVID restrictions and associated safety measures.</p>

	Project Two: Ty Nyth
1.10	Through the use of Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) funding we are in the final stage of acquiring the Ty Nyth site in Mold from Clwyd Alyn Housing Association. A report has been commissioned to identify the work that is required to bring the buildings and site to registration standards under RISCA legislation. A specific focus is also being given to ensure that development plans will provide sufficient parking for staff and visitors to the site. Once available the report will provide an informed basis to finalise the range of regulated support that can be provided at the site, maximising the use of the main building and the 2 semi-detached properties that constitute Ty Nyth.
1.11	At the centre of the planned development at Ty Nyth will be the provision of a Children's Residential Assessment Centre providing short term (up to 20 week) care as well as therapeutic assessment and support through a dedicated Multi Systemic Therapy Team (MST). The purpose is to undertake intensive assessment and support to meet the needs of young people whilst seeking family reunification, or a longer term local fostering/residential placement appropriate to the child's assessed needs. We are exploring the potential of this being a shared, and jointly funded, project with Wrexham. This approach will facilitate the leverage of grant funding for the establishment of the provision.
	Project Three: Emergency Provision
1.12	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 child. This necessitates the development of a holding position to provide accommodation and support until a placement can be found. This 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.
1.13	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 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.
1.14	The arrangements that local authorities have to put in place in emergencies can amount to unregulated placements. Under RISCA it is an offence for a person to provide a regulated service without being registered in respect of that service. This project will move to establish a registered provision that be set up in an emergency to provide accommodation, care and support. The provision will be designed to open as situations arise and close down as move on placements found. We would draw on registered staff in other provisions as opposed to employing a dedicated staffing Team.

Project Four: Small Group Homes	
1.15	The small group homes model involves the establishment of registered services in community based houses supporting one or two children. The model has a strong community and family feel for those children who do not suit support in larger settings, often due to challenges in finding appropriate matches with other children, and their need for intensive levels of support. This model is being delivered successfully in other areas including Anglesey and Bristol.
1.16	For economy of scale Homes would be grouped in two's with a shared management and staffing group who could be used flexibly across the 2 sites which would need to be within a 5 mile proximity of each other.
1.17	Our intention is to explore establishing out first small group homes project aligned to the development of the Ty Nyth site. We are also working closely with Housing colleagues who are supportive in identifying potential properties within our existing housing stock. Indicatively we are seeking to commit to 6 small group homes over the next 3 years. After each provision is developed we will undertake a gateway review to affirm need, that the provision will deliver the intended outcomes and there is a clear financial plan to support the development. The development will only proceed if the gateway review confirms that this is the most appropriate way forward. Given the size and community base, any property that is no longer needed as a Small Group Home in future could quickly be reverted back to social housing.

2.00 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
2.01	<p>Arosfa The Council's Capital programme has funded the refurbishment of Arosfa. Social Services has secured ICF funding to the value of £200k per annum toward the total costs of the Arosfa service. Other grant funding, including BCU health funding such as CHC, will be maximised wherever possible towards the service.</p> <p>We will work within the IFC funding envelope (200k) for the next 12 months and work with Action for Children to establish service cost based on the needs of children/ young people. This inform a funding bid to the next iteration of ICF.</p>
2.02	<p>Ty Nyth £500k ICF funding has been secured for the acquisition of Ty Nyth. An initial high level estimate, which is based on a number of assumptions, indicates a refurbishment cost of £1.1m for the main Ty Nyth building. ICF capital grant funding has been identified to meet this cost. However, the semi-detached properties would be an additional cost, but they require significantly less investment. This may necessitate a phased approach to the site with refurbishment and establishment of the service at the semi-detached properties depending on the actual cost and whether Wrexham become a funding partner.</p>

	<p>A proposal for a Welsh Government grant to support the development of 'safe accommodation for children with complex, high end emotional and high end needs' has also been submitted which, if successful, will provide an additional funding source for the refurbishment. However, we are advised that funding submissions far exceed the available grant provision.</p> <p>A framework has been identified which offers the potential for us to commission a contractor to develop of the site with pace given the grant requirement for works to be completed within the 2021/22 financial year. As we move forward through this framework we will have a more detailed precise costing schedule and understanding of the priority areas for completion in 2021/22 within the funding envelope.</p> <p>Revenue funding has been secured through the Welsh Government Transformation Fund to cover the initial set up and revenue expenditure in 2021/22 for the registered care and support Team as well as the provision of the MST support. A detailed costed business case is being developed to identify associated revenue costs from 2022 onwards with anticipated costs being identified through the Medium Term Financial plan.</p>
2.03	<p>Small Group Homes</p> <p>A costed business case is being developed to ensure a full analysis of the financial costs associated with Small Group Home provision. Based on a premise of supporting children with a high acuity of need, and therefore staffing support we are estimating a top end cost of 300k revenue costs for each provision. Whilst expensive this still compares favourably with the annual costs of commissioning this care. Again the associated cost pressures are being built into the Medium Term Financial plan</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	Existing residential placements range from £3,500 to £10,000 per week if beds are available. COVID-19 has seen an increase in the number of children looked after, a reduction in the number of available Residential beds and sharp increases in the rates Providers are now charging for placements. Even some of our existing providers are now moving to inflate their fees. There is not always an alignment of bed availability with placement need particularly closer to home. Failure to rebalance the market is likely to lead to more children being placed out of county at an unaffordable cost to the local authority.
3.02	The facilities will need to be registered with CIW and our delivery plans will be subject to CIW's timelines for considering applications. Arosfa is more straightforward as this would be a variation to an existing registration.
3.03	Finding suitably qualified and experienced registered managers for the provisions is likely to be a challenge. As local authorities have not developed their own in house provision for many decades we do not have a supply of in house staff ready to step into these roles and will need to compete with the open market. We will need to ensure that our approach to recruitment does not destabilise the local market.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Initial engagement work has commenced in Mold with specific individuals. As Ty Nyth comes into the ownership of the local authority, and the plans for the site are finalised, targeted work will take place to ensure effective communication with local residents and organisations. The development of all proposals will need to have a detailed stakeholder communication and engagement plan to reassure communities.
4.02	These plans to develop in-house Residential Children's Homes were outlined at two well attended Out of County Member's Workshops held on the 22 nd of March to discuss Out of County pressures. There was unanimous and overwhelming support for the proposals from members.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES CYMRU: Delivering Transformation Grant Programme 2019-20 Rebalancing social care: A report on Children's Services https://www.adss.cymru/en/blog/post/rebalancing-social-care-a-report-on-children-s-services

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Neil Ayling – Chief Officer (Social Services) Telephone: 01352 704511 E-mail: neil.ayling@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	ICF (Integrated Care Fund): Welsh Assembly Government fund that helps health boards and social care partners in local authorities, housing and voluntary sectors to work together to support frail and older people, people with a learning disability, children with complex needs due to disability or illness and carers, including young carers. Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive family and community based intervention for children and young people aged 11-17, where young people are at risk of out of home placement in either care or custody. MST teams focus on the whole world of the young person - their homes and families, schools and teachers, neighbourhoods and friends. MST staff go to where families live and work with them intensively for three

to five months, including being on call to families 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Looked After Child Looked after children are children and young people who are in public care and looked after by the state. This includes those who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care. The term is also used to describe 'accommodated' children and young people who are looked after on a voluntary basis at the request of, or by agreement with, their parents.