

Vale Of Glamorgan Council Placement Commissioning Strategy Homes for a Brighter Future

From April 2025 to April 2027

Commissioning is... the process of identifying needs within the population and of developing policy directions, service models and the market, to meet those needs in the most appropriate and cost-effective way.

*IPC (2016) National Commissioning Board (Wales):
Procurement Options in Social Care in Wales.*

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1. Introduction

When a child comes into care, the local authority becomes the child's '**corporate parent**' meaning it has the collective responsibility along with its elected members, employees, and partner agencies to be the best parent it can be to that child.

(Welsh Government, 2024)

All babies, children and young people have rights [UN Convention on Rights of a Child \(UNCRC\) - UNICEF UK](#) and require a safe and secure environment to grow and thrive. Good parents support their children to access these rights. They protect and support their children against dangers and risks. They are ambitious and support their child to reach their potential. They celebrate and share in their achievements and support through times of challenge.

A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a Corporate Parent that would be expected from a good parent.

In 2023 the Welsh Government developed a Corporate Parenting Charter for Wales to, “promote the collective responsibility of local authorities to safeguard and promote the rights and life chances of care-experienced children and young people”.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to supporting children to access their rights and being good Corporate Parents for every baby, child or young person who is in our care. The Vale of Glamorgan Council has signed up to this Charter.

1.1 The National Context

A key influence on the development of this strategy is Welsh Government's programme for government commitment to eliminate profit from the care of children who are looked after. This will change how the Vale of Glamorgan provides homes for children who are looked after by 2030 by removing for-profit providers from the delivery of looked after children's care. ([Removing profit from the care of children looked after | GOV.WALES](#)).

There are several other national laws and policies that the Vale of Glamorgan must also consider in delivering services for babies, children and young people:

- [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)
- [Corporate Parenting Charter – A Promise from Wales](#)
- [NEST framework \(mental health and wellbeing\): introduction | GOV.WALES](#)
- [National framework for commissioning care and support: code of practice](#)

The Vale of Glamorgan is also part of a national scheme to support the settlement of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:

- [Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: national transfer scheme - GOV.UK](#)

1.2 The local context

Our commitments to meeting the needs of babies, children, young people and their families are identified in the [VALE OF GLAMORGAN CORPORATE STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED CARE AND SUPPORT](#).

The Strategy's key objectives are:

- To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after
- To manage risk confidently and provide support at the edge of care.
- To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality services.
- To give children clearly planned journeys through care.

The objectives are underpinned by a number of principles which are shown in the following diagram:

The responsibility for meeting the needs of children and young people looked after or at risk of becoming looked after rests across all services for children, including statutory and Third Sector partners, and is always exercised in partnership with children and young people and their families.

Preventative services and early intervention to support children and young people in need and their families should be provided to empower families to stay together.

Formal kinship fostering arrangements will be explored in partnership with children and young people and their families as the preferred alternative arrangement where it is necessary for the local authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children and young people, but with clear step down plans to alternative Orders.

Residential care placements will be made only where the complexity and challenge of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting, or where a young person is subject to a Court ordered secure remand. Efforts will always be focused on stepping down from residential care wherever possible.

Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child and young person's needs. It is the role of the multi-agency Placement Panel to agree that a child should become looked after and consider the most appropriate type of placement to meet these needs, with due consideration given to the views of the child and young people and the available resources.

Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, and training and, where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

The majority of children and young people are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.

Where children and young people cannot be supported within their immediate family, families will be supported to achieve sustainable family arrangements within their wider family and friendship networks and, where necessary, to make these arrangements permanent through the use of Child Arrangement Orders.

Where a child's or young person's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements described, consideration will be given to the needs of the child or young person and how they can be met in a substitute family, preferably with in-house foster carers and, if not, with independent fostering agency carers, wherever possible living within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.

All children and young people looked after of statutory school age should receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Providing appropriate support to enable engagement in education is just as important as finding suitable care arrangements for children and young people looked after.

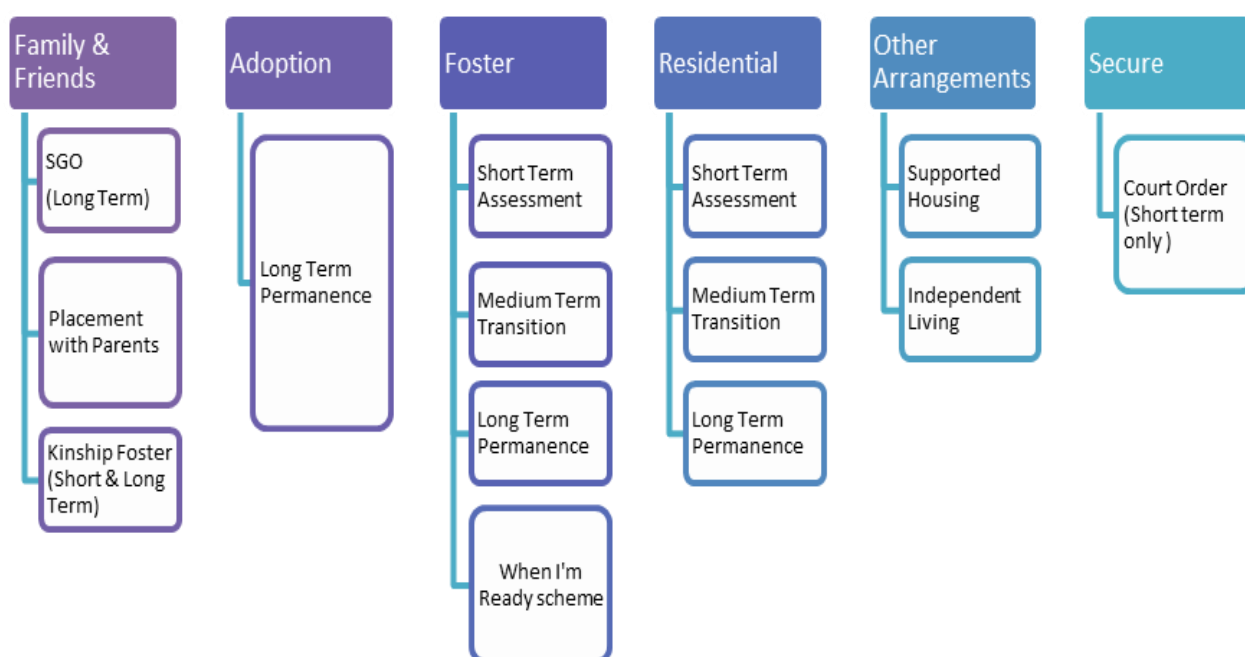
There are several principles that support delivery of these objectives and a number of outcomes to be delivered via actions within the Corporate Strategy that also align to our placement commissioning intentions:

Outcome	Actions
Increased service quality and consistency of approach across agencies	Involve children and young people in service development, procurement and quality monitoring.
	Complete an annual external placement audit to ensure quality and value for money.
Increase the number and diversity of local foster placements	Explore the need for targeted parent and children and young people support services / accommodation.
	Develop a respite arm to our fostering service.
	Develop an emergency arm to our fostering service, including access to Emergency accommodation.
Children and young people are placed with extended families or connected persons where possible.	Develop the training and support offer for kinship carers
	Review the offer to foster carers e.g. finance and support to ensure it aids recruitment and retention.
	Increase the number of mainstream foster carers within the Vale.
Increased housing options and housing support for children and young people.	Develop a second children and young people's residential home with Llamau.
Better housing options and housing support for children and young people.	Adopt a 'my first home' model
	Work in partnership to identify opportunities for joint funding and improved support to better meet increasingly diverse needs e.g. young homeless and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
	Develop a pipeline of accommodation projects reflecting local needs.

1.3 Homes

A **Placement (a Home)** means the provision of accommodation, care and support by a local authority.
(Welsh Government)

When a child or young person needs to be looked after by the Council, we are committed to providing a home that is best suited to meet the child's assessed needs. The diagram below shows different types of homes that may be explored:



1.4 Partnership working

Partnership working in a health and social care context is cooperation between and integration of different organisations:

- to improve care and support, ensuring people have more say and control
- to improve well-being outcomes
- to provide co-ordinated, seamless and person-centred care and support
- to make more effective use of resources, skills, and expertise through integrated working.

(From Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 – Part 9 Statutory Guidance [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014: part 9 statutory guidance \(partnership arrangements\)](#))

In the Vale of Glamorgan, we know that sometimes we need to work with partners for our babies, children and young people to have the best possible start in life.

We work with several different organisations to find the best possible homes for babies, children and young people:

- Foster Wales
- Vale, Valleys, and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative

The Vale of Glamorgan works in partnership with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Education and Third Sector partners to support children and young people with health, education and social care support needs. Welsh Government's Regional Integration Fund (RIF) helps to deliver some projects for babies, children and young people with emotional mental health needs [Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund | GOV.WALES](#).

We have especially well-developed relationships with the Enfys and Goleudy teams in Cardiff and Vale UHB, which provide psychological support to children and young people with complex trauma, and their caregivers. This offers wrap around support to children looked after who have psychological support needs.

We also have strong links with Action for Children and Llamau as strategic and operational partners and through commissioned services they deliver on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan. We recognise the expertise and skills that they and other third sector organisations have and this helps to deliver the best possible outcomes for our children looked after.

We use the following frameworks and tools to commission placements:

- Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs)
- All-Wales Local Authority Framework for the Provision of Foster Care Services for Children and Young People
- All-Wales Local Authority Framework for the Provision of Residential Care Services for Children and Young People
- Children's Commissioning Support Resource

2. Data Analysis

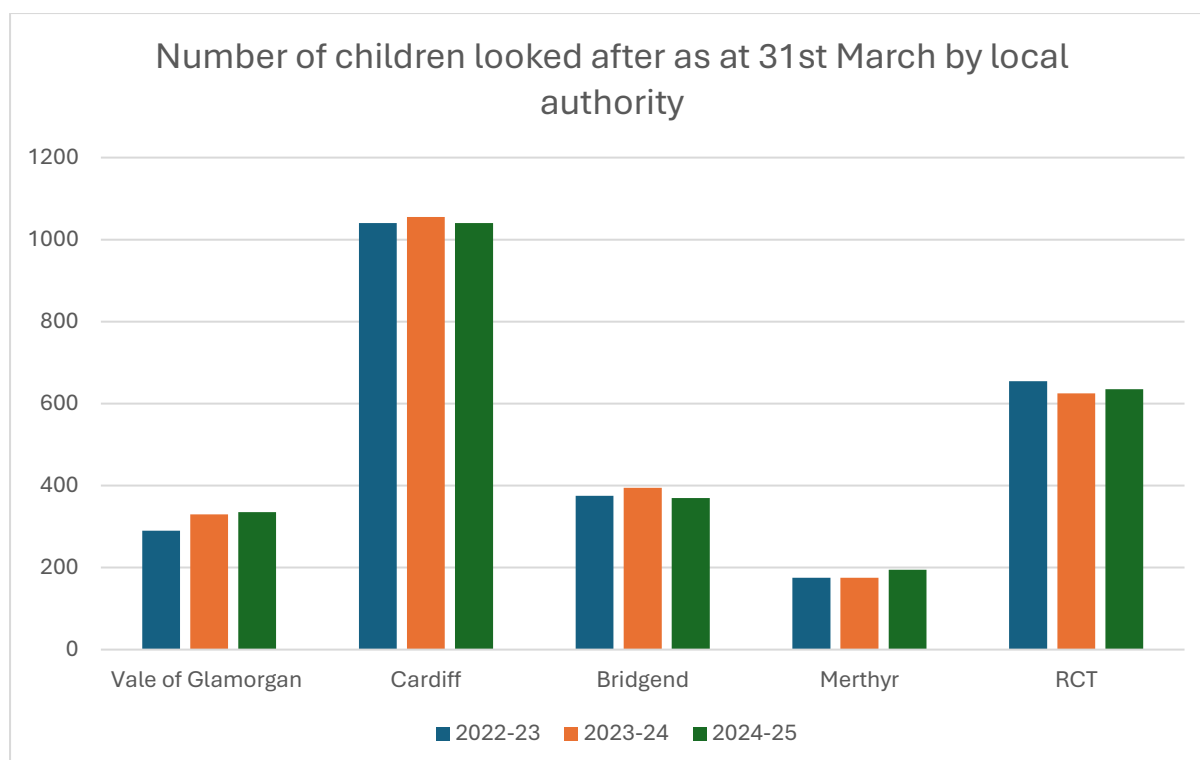
We have used a combination of national data from StatsWales* and local data from our own records.

**data may not be as complete and accurate as our local data because of how information is categorised and the need to anonymise information that could identify particular children or groups.*

The Vale of Glamorgan have seen a 34% increase in the number of children looked after from March 2020 to June 2024. However, the number of children looked after remained lower than the All Wales average until 2023. Positively, the rate of increase in the number of children becoming looked after has slowed since 2022/23 with an average increase of just 7% to 2023/24. As of the end of quarter 1 2024/25, the children looked after population stands at 348 children.

2.1 Total numbers of Children Looked After

We have compared our national data against our nearest neighbours, Cardiff and Bridgend, Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff, who are our partners in the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption collaborative.

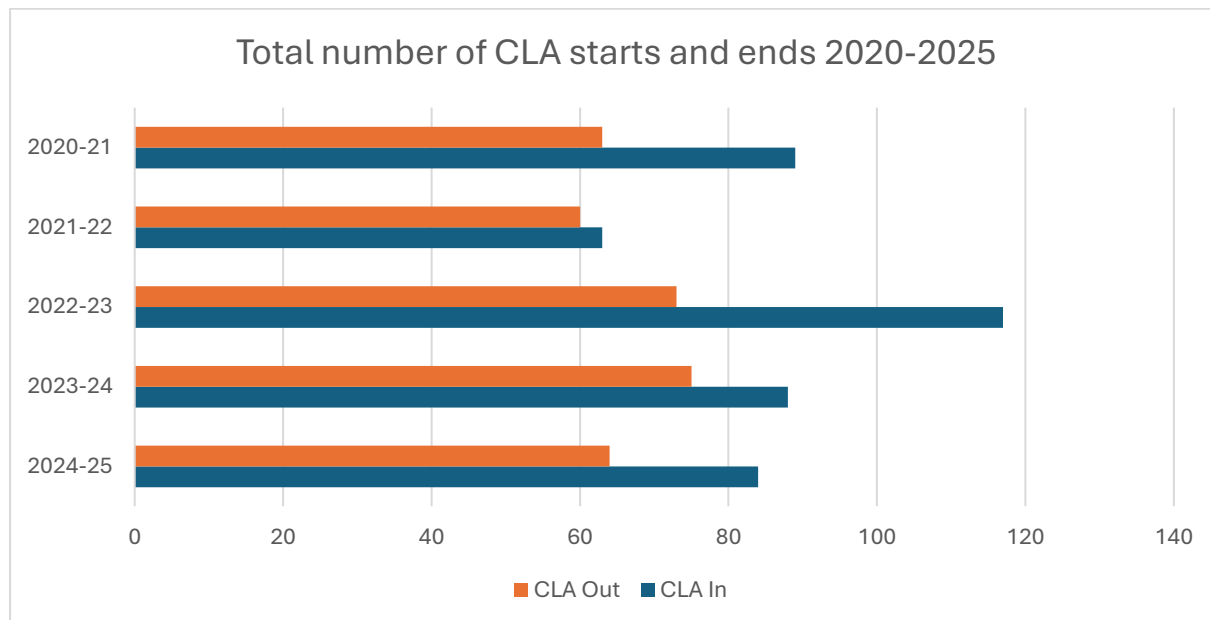


Data Source: Stats Wales

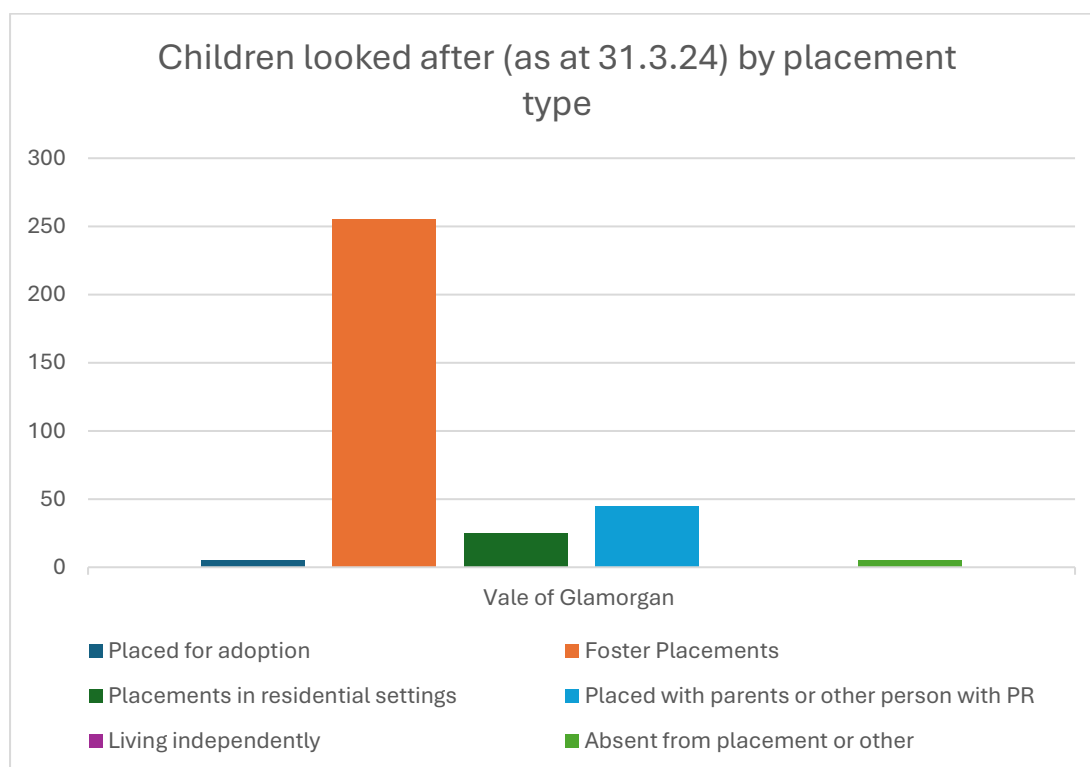
Numbers of children who are looked after in the Vale of Glamorgan have increased each year since 2022.

This is in line with the national trend across Wales, but different to Cardiff & Bridgend where there was a slight decrease in 2024.

Our local data shows the number of children starting to be looked after exceeds the number ending being looked after each year between 2020 and 2025. This leads to an overall increase in the numbers of children looked after.



2.2. Types of homes



Data Source: Stats Wales

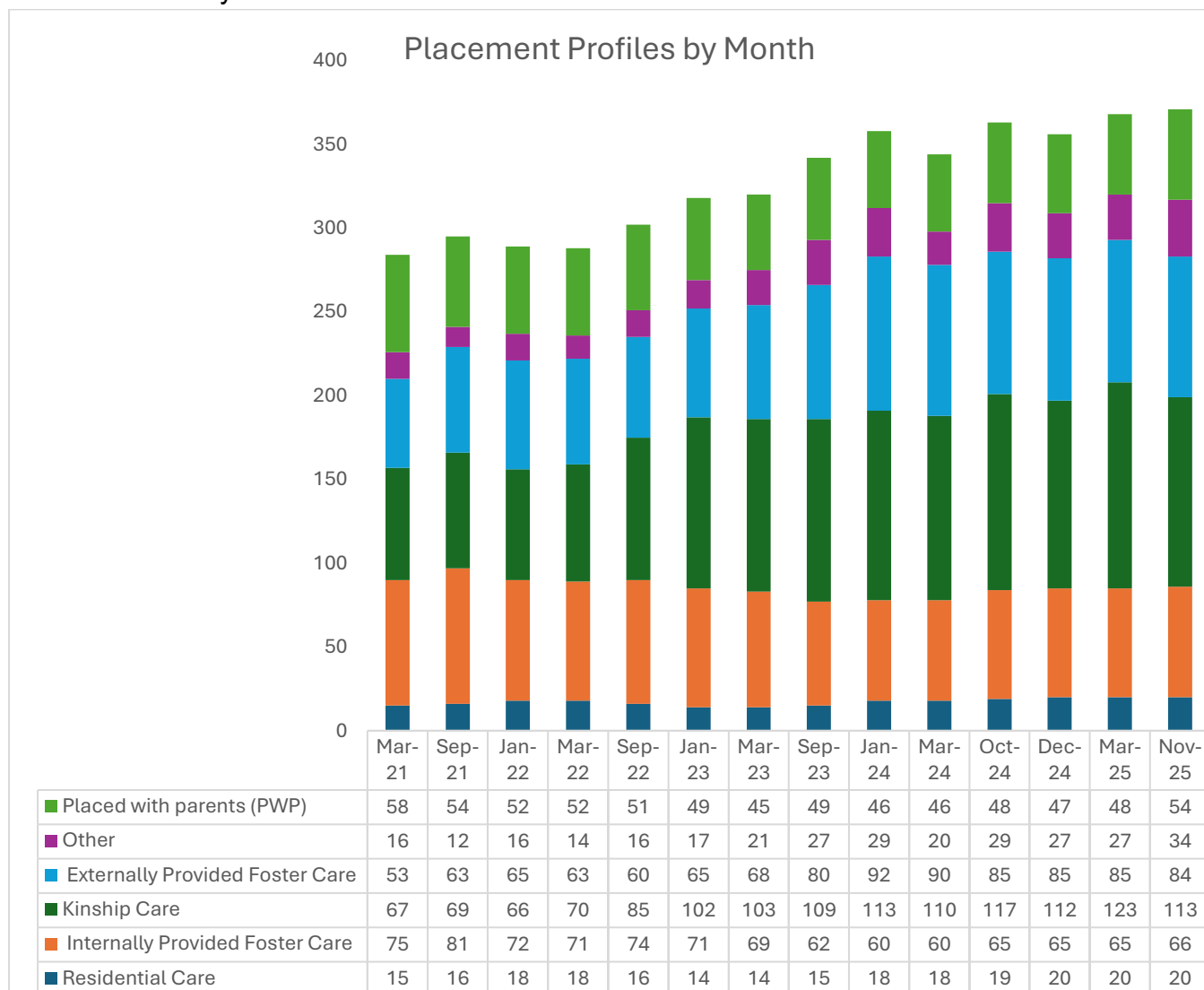
This data is a snapshot of the numbers of children in different types of homes on 31.3.24.

Because children's lives and circumstances are unique, this data changes frequently so a year end snapshot provides an overview of this information.

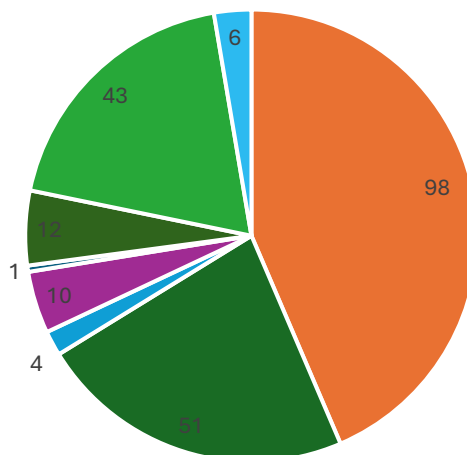
Some of the StatsWales datasets are not displayed because they "are not sufficiently robust or could be disclosive".

The data show foster homes were the most frequently used placement type, which aligns with the Vale of Glamorgan's strategic intentions as outlined in our Eliminate Plan.

This is reinforced by our local data. This shows that most young people are placed in friends and family foster care:



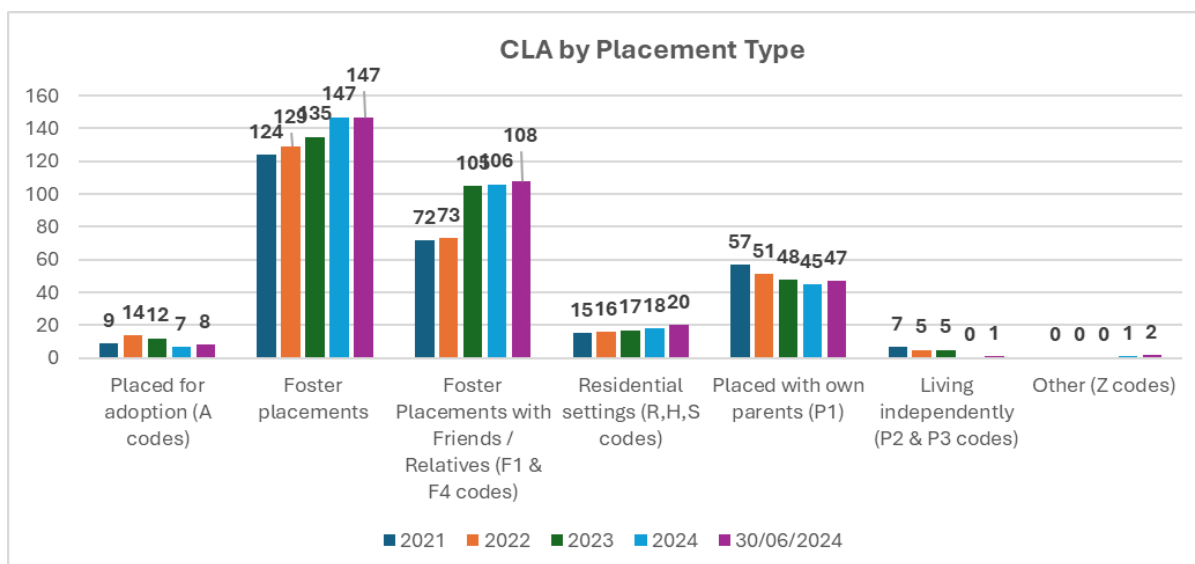
Where our children live, as at 31.3.25



- A62: Placed for adoption with PO where consent is dispensed with not with current FC
- F1: Inside LA:- Foster Placement with connected Person (e.g. relative/friend)
- F2: Inside LA: Placement with other FC's provided by own LA
- F31: Inside County - Placement with other FC, arranged through third sector IFA
- F32: Inside County - Placement with other FC, arranged through private IFA
- F4: Out of county - Placement with connected person (e.g. relative/friend)
- F5: Out of county - Placement with other FC's, provided by own LA
- F61: Out of County - Placement with other FC, arranged through third sector IFA
- F62: Out of County - Placement with other FC, arranged through private IFA
- F7: Inside County - Parent and child foster placement
- F8: Out of County - Parent and child foster placement
- H3: Homes inside LA boundary
- H4: Homes outside LA boundary
- H5: Res Accom not subject to the regs covering a care home service for children
- P1: Placed With Own Parents Or Person With Parental Responsibility
- P2: Ind living, eg flat or lodgings without onsite formal support staff, or bedsit, B&B, friends.
- S1: Schools: Resl schools, except where dual-registered
- F51: Out of County - Placement with other FC's provided by a different LA
- R2: Other Resi Setting: NHS/Health trust /other / providing medical or nursing care.
- H22: Secure unit outside Wales

Our data also indicates there has been a decrease in in-house foster placements since 2021 (from 26% of placements in March 21 to 18% of placements in October 2024) and an increase in external foster placements during this period (from 19% to 23%).

The majority of our children looked after are placed within the Vale of Glamorgan. We have an increasing rate of children placed in local authorities other than the Vale of Glamorgan which reflects the increase in our use of the independent fostering agency placements, although the majority are in neighbouring local authorities close to the Vale of Glamorgan.



Kinship care and placement with parents

Most of our children looked after live with their parents or wider family. This reflects a positive intent to place children wherever possible within their own networks. What has been challenging for the Vale of Glamorgan is the increasing rate year on year of our number of children in independent fostering agency placements, reflecting a local and national shortage of foster carers.

In-house foster placements are preferable because they are more likely to align with ways of working like our Building on Strengths model, support delivery of the removal of profit from the care of children who are looked after, and help to achieve the Corporate Strategy outcome to, “increase the number and diversity of local foster homes.”

This corroborates the assumption that recruiting more in-house carers will have a positive impact on the lives of children looked after.

2.3 Reasons for becoming looked after

Understanding trends in the reasons for children becoming looked after can inform areas to prioritise for early intervention and prevention activities.

There are a number of reasons why children and young people become looked after, and it is rarely a single reason that requires this level of intervention.

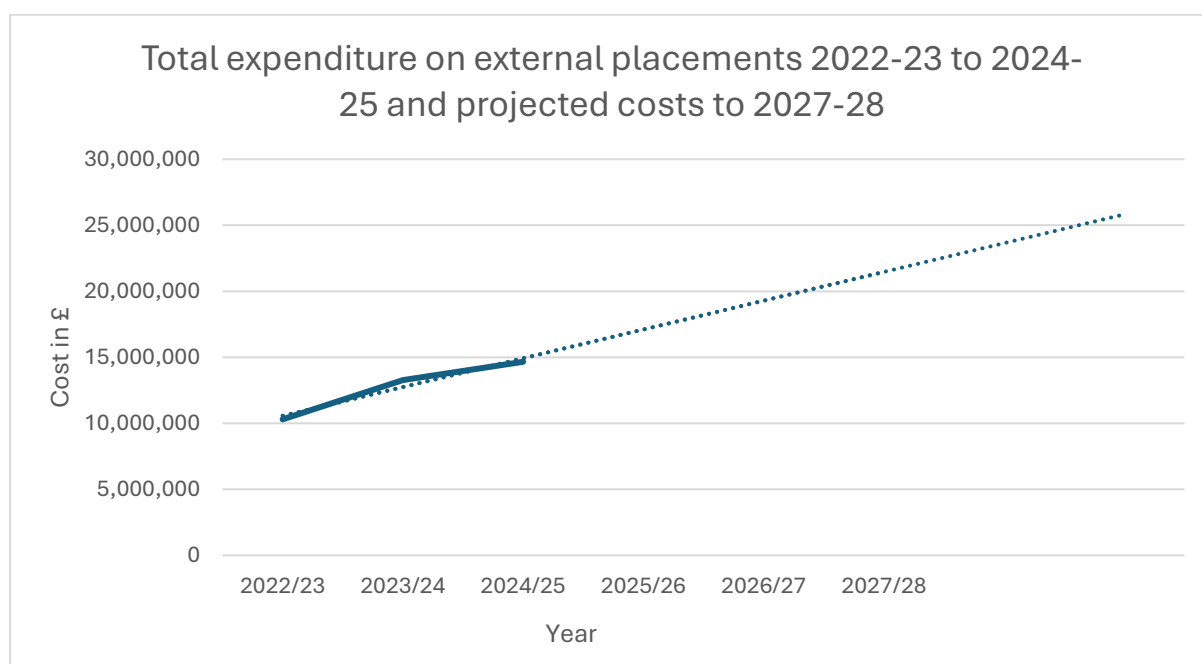
The Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support includes the primary reasons for children and young people becoming looked after in the Vale of Glamorgan as parental domestic violence, parental substance and alcohol misuse, and parental mental health.

From December 2021, the Home Office has mandated Local Authorities across the UK to receive Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). The majority of these children arrive in Kent after crossing the English Channel. Once these children have been processed in Kent and allocated to a Local Authority, we have five days to receive them and identify a placement for them. Many UASC we receive are aged between 16-17 years but are “age disputed” which makes them difficult to place alongside other children in foster care. Therefore, the majority UASC received by the Vale of Glamorgan are placed in 24 hour supported accommodation at an average cost of £2,000 per week. Since December 2021, the Vale of Glamorgan has received 45 UASC through the National Transfer Scheme. We are expecting a further 3 UASC in the next 4 three cycles in 2025/26. As of the end of November 2025 we are supporting 20 UASC who are children looked after and 19 who are care leavers.

3. Financial Analysis

Children and Young People Services in the Vale of Glamorgan operated with an overall placement budget of £6,976,749 in 2024/25, to include internal and external placements.

Expenditure on homes for children has risen by £4,168,587 between 2022 and 2025. Should the current level of placement expenditure continue, the projected costs are anticipated to rise over the next 3 years to £22.5m, an increase of 15%.



Inflation of costs from external providers are driven by fee uplifts, complexity of need and additional support requirements, and costlier new provisions and arrangements replacing older ones.

In common with other local authorities, the Vale of Glamorgan has experienced an increase in the number of children with especially complex needs, and the rising costs associated with meeting these needs within appropriate arrangements continues to place pressure on budgets. Accommodation arrangements of this type can cost over £400,000 a year.

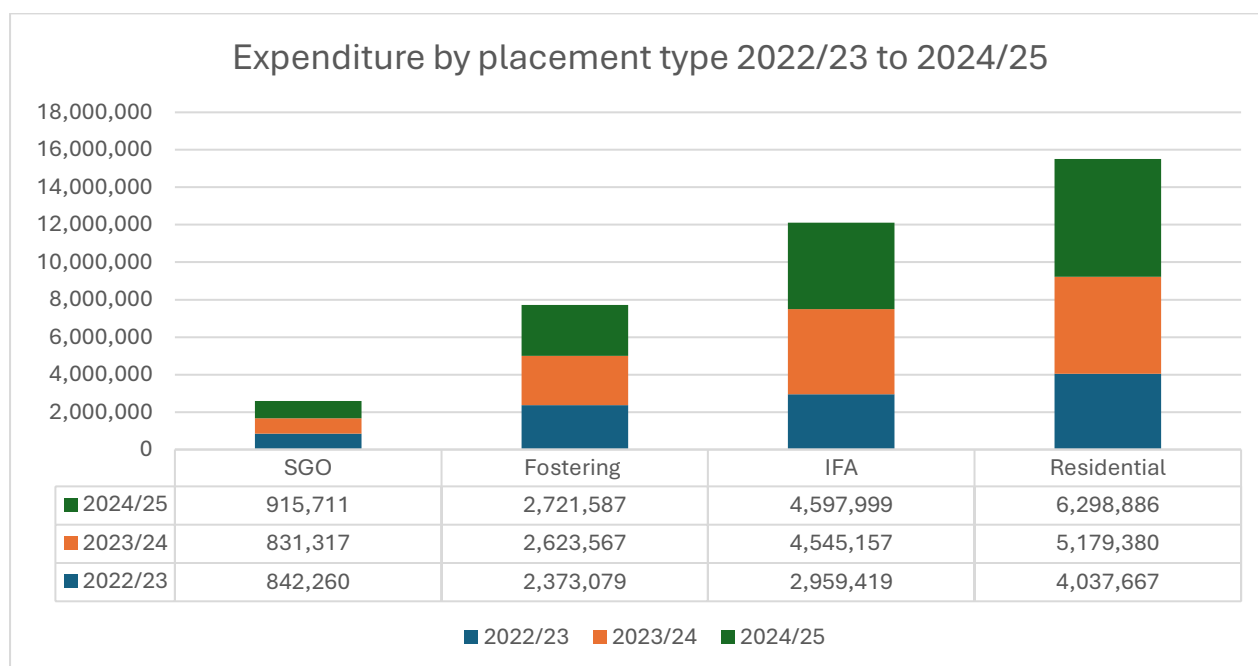
2022/23 fee uplifts were driven by cost of living and the real living wage, and uplifts in subsequent years responded to need and demand and ongoing cost of living. 2024/25 uplifts responded to the increase in National Insurance and Real Living Wage.

3.1 Partnership pricing

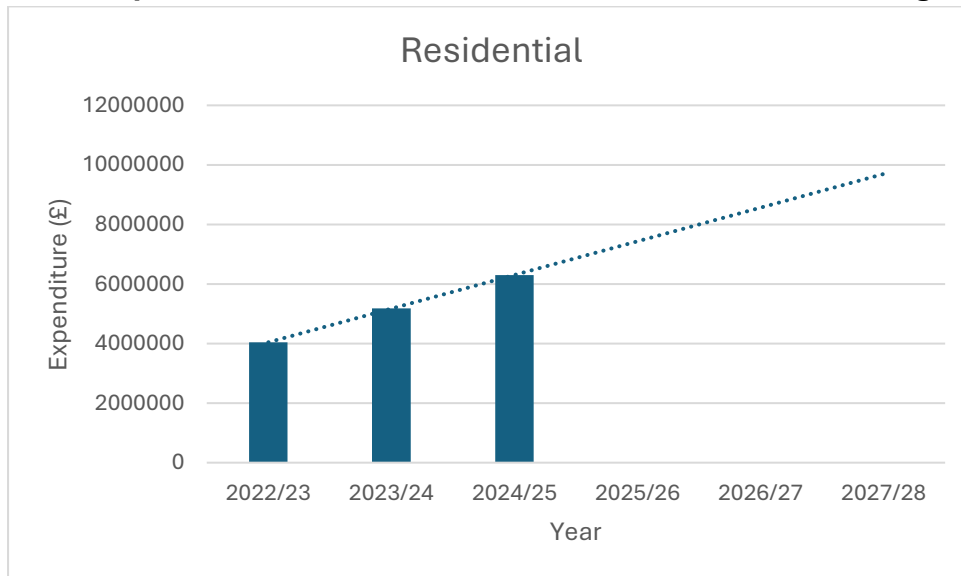
The Vale of Glamorgan works closely with the 4Cs to pay a fair price for independent fostering and external residential homes that deliver value for money alongside positive outcomes for children in our care.

This partnership approach to pricing and negotiation of cost of care enables us to better understand the true cost of care for each individual child and young person based on their needs. Not all providers for children's care are part of the 4Cs framework and regulating these costs can be more challenging.

Each year since 2022-23, the greatest proportion of our accommodation expenditure has been on residential homes. Whilst use of residential homes are low in numbers, they are higher in cost due to the range of therapeutic support and interventions in place to support children. The costs of these arrangements are predicted to continue to rise and as a result have shaped our commissioning intentions to develop local provisions.

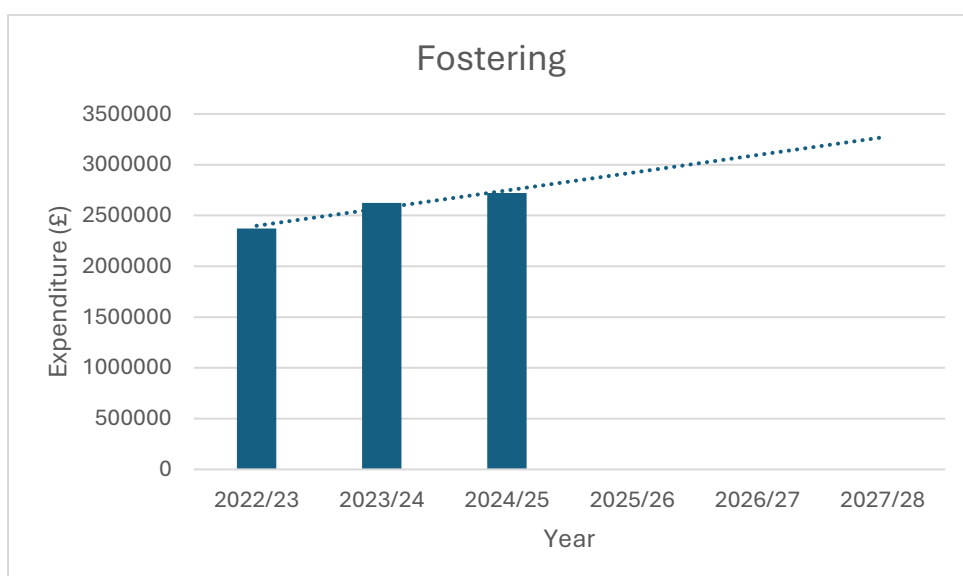
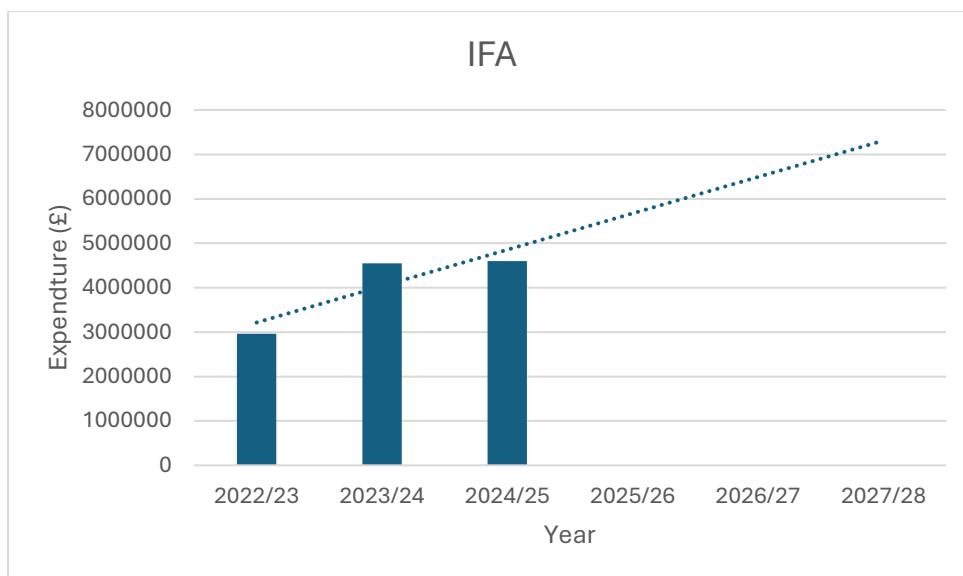


3.2 Comparison of residential, internal and external fostering homes



Over previous years, fostering recruitment has not kept pace with demand and this, alongside increasing complexity and sibling groups, has required commissioning of external provision to adequately meet the needs of children requiring foster care.

The Vale of Glamorgan is beginning to show a change in expenditure for Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) which reflects the strategic move to supporting a larger pool of in-house foster carers and less reliance on external provision. The Vale of Glamorgan will continue to require external fostering provision to support placement stability and provide specialist support where required.



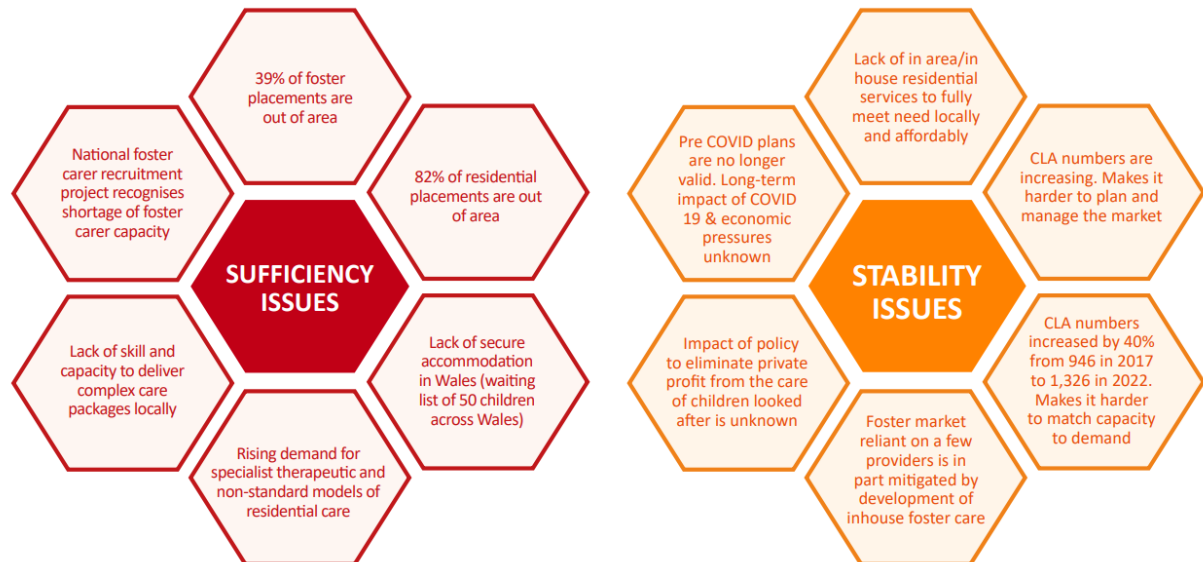
In-house arrangements

The majority of accommodation arrangements made by the Local Authority are internally provided, with the spend associated with this broken down across fostering, When I'm Ready, adoption and Special Guardianship Orders.

4. Market Sufficiency and Removing Profit from Care

The 2022-27 Cardiff and Vale Market Stability Report (MSR) summarises a range of stability and sufficiency issues with the care market:

cavrp.org/app/uploads/2023/03/Market-Stability-Report.pdf



Of particular significance over the next 3 years will be Welsh Government's "removing profit from the care of children looked after".

[Removing profit from the care of children looked after: transition to a not-for-profit model](#)

Sufficiency of accommodation types across the placement spectrum is weak in all nations of the UK and current policy direction in Wales aims to rebalance the public sector away from reliance on commissioning external providers to a stronger public sector offer. The policy has an ambitious timeline of the current Senedd term, which will require significant change management at national, regional and local level.

Organisations that are currently delivering care services will be subject to new rules from 01.04.2027 that prevents for-profit expansion of these businesses.

Strategic commissioning against the context of uncertainty and live debate must be dynamic and innovative, while safely managing the change process for our children looked after, to mitigate against risk to disruption to their home lives.

The Vale of Glamorgan will make use of the opportunity to apply for additional funding via the Housing with Care Fund and IRCF for the development of local residential and supported accommodation solutions. However, in addition to capital funding, there will be revenue implications for each of these developments for which funding will be required.

4.1 Summary

On current projections, the Vale of Glamorgan has the following identified challenges in achieving commissioning intentions, including moving to a not-for-profit model of care:

- An anticipated increasing number of children looked after given the continuing complexity of need within our communities, forecast at a minimum rate of 7% until end March 2027; an additional 49 children. On current trends, 50% of these would be placed with parents or wider family, 40% would require foster care and the remaining 10% residential provision.
- Some children currently live in a range of placements with a plan for permanence within these homes. Eliminate exemptions will be required for these children.
- Some children currently access for-profit specialist provision where the Local Authority would not be able to replicate this type of provision and where exemptions would be required for the length of those placements. Specialist placements of this type are anticipated to be an ongoing need.
- There is a projected need for 5 further residential placements over the next 2 years.
- There are risks associated with current for profit providers not fulfilling their stated intentions to convert to not for profit.

While the Vale of Glamorgan is adopting the contingency position of planning to upscale internal provision to meet more of our predicted future demand, it will take time to rebalance, away from a position of externally commissioning care. It will be critical therefore, that we form strategic partnerships with not-for-profit providers, both existing and new, to meet our needs.

5. Action Plan to support Homes for a Brighter Future

To achieve the Corporate Strategy aim of providing and commissioning a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality placements which meet the diverse range of children's needs, we will:

Action	What we are doing to achieve this	How we will know we have achieved this
Increase the use of in-house fostering service	Recruit more foster carers	Increased numbers of in house foster homes (including family and friends)
Reduce the use of independent fostering	Recruit more foster carers (10 households per year)	- The number of in-house foster carers will increase in line with the target stated in our Eliminate Plan - The numbers of external foster homes will reduce - The expenditure on external foster homes will reduce
Develop an emergency fostering scheme	- Recruit more foster carers - Acquire properties that can be used as pop up homes - Deliver 1-2 additional emergency bedspaces by developing a pop-up property	- We will have acquired and developed the number of bedspaces stated in our Eliminate Plan - Reduction in high-cost emergency homes
Improve the management of young people into and out of residential care	Work with providers to implement the Building on Strengths model across residential homes	- Young people will have greater stability - There will be fewer young people with three or more homes in a year

Develop in-Council residential provision in partnership with the third sector	• Commissioning a provider to deliver services on our behalf • Purchasing properties they can deliver support from - approximately 4 residential bedspaces over 2 properties	• A provider will be in place to deliver residential support • We will have acquired and developed the number of bedspaces stated in our Eliminate Plan • The cost of residential provision will decrease
Step children down from residential to foster care where this is appropriate	• Recruit more foster carers (10 households per year)	• The numbers of children in residential homes will decrease • The numbers in foster homes will increase
Discharge care orders for children in kinship arrangements		• There will be more CLA ends • The numbers in kinship arrangements will reduce
Develop accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	• Acquire and remodel properties – approximately 10-12 bedspaces over 3 properties	• We will have acquired and developed the number of bedspaces stated in our Eliminate Plan • The model for UASC young people will be in place