

# CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

**Report to:** Healthier Communities Scrutiny

**Date of meeting:** 2 September 2024

**Title:** Children's Safe Accommodation - Update

**Purpose of the report:** Update on the development of an in-house 24-hour Children's Safe Accommodation provision in Ceredigion.

**For:** Information

**Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:** Cllr. Alun Williams

## Introduction

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 Ceredigion Cabinet approved a proposal to establish a small group of sites to provide safe accommodation for children in Ceredigion. The aim was to support children and young people, who require 24/7 care and support, to remain in Ceredigion whilst medium to long-term community placements could be sourced.

This report provides an update on the progress to date within the settings that will be in the Aeron Valley, Aberaeron and Aberystwyth.

- **Aeron Valley** (Sycharth, Felinfach)- provide up to **three** in-county placements for children and/or young people, including sibling groups and those with complex needs.
- **Aberaeron** - provide up to **two** in-county placements for children and/or young people, including sibling groups and those with complex needs.
- **Aberystwyth** - provide **one** in-county placement for a child/young person, including those with complex needs, or **one** parent and baby placement.

All three locations will be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) on a Through-Age basis, providing future flexibility for the council to use for other placement styles.

## Current position

### Facilities

All three settings have received grant funding through the Welsh Government (WG) Housing with Care Fund (HCF). Totalling c£2.1m, this has supported the acquisition of the properties in Aeron Valley and Aberystwyth as well as the conversion of the homes (into therapeutic environments), in line with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA), and in readiness to register the sites with CIW.

Construction for the Aeron Valley and Aberaeron settings is due to be completed by October 2024, with the Aberystwyth provision to be completed by early 2025.

We are currently finalising the documentation that will trigger the CIW registration process. This process is likely to take 12 weeks and can only begin when the physical site works are completed.

### **Staffing**

A recruitment campaign is underway to create the in-house team that will provide 24/7 care and support to they children and/or young people housed across the Safe Accommodation model. To attract suitable candidates, we have worked with the Human Resources team to access a range of marketing tools available to us.

Unfortunately, the incumbent Registered Manager, recruited to develop this model, has decided to leave the authority before launch and subsequently this role has also been re-advertised.

The Direct Services team does, however, have a management role that can temporarily hold the Registered Manager activity as a contingency should recruitment not meet timescales to match the registration of sites.

### **Matching process**

An important consideration when identifying suitable candidates for the provision is the 'matching process'. To ensure the process considers the best interests of the child/young person, before any move of placement a broad group of professionals work collaboratively to identify the most suitable young people to transfer back into Ceredigion as the new settings will not be suitable for all.

Going forward this process will be integral in ensuring fewer children/young people are placed out of county in the first instance.

This process also ensures any group placement matching is reviewed, particularly for our Aeron Valley provision where there could be up to 3 young people being supported.

Once the matching process has been completed, transition planning will start that will include supporting the young people in getting to know staff, introducing them to their new home and individualised training for staff ensuring that the care and support provision is tailored to the needs of each child / young person.

### **Financial benefit**

In the short term, a financial benefit will be achieved only in 'opportunity cost' given the number of Children Looked After remains significantly above the long-term average.

There is substantial revenue investment required to place children in out of county safe accommodation settings. Currently, the local authority is quoted in the range of £5k-10k *per week* for standard needs support and between £12k-15k *per week* for complex cases. The local placement provision will offset some of these unplanned costs.

Some of the benefit to in-county provision is long-term community retention (schooling, training, employment, social value and economic contribution) as too often out of county placements lead to the young person settling away, and never returning to Ceredigion.

It is worth noting that *secure* placements can cost upward of £20k per week if these are required and these costs are fully outwith the standard budgets for Social Care given their rare occurrence.

## **Summary**

These flexible placement options, which if successfully registered as Though Age settings will be a first for Wales, are a valuable addition to the safeguarding proposition for Ceredigion. Alongside expanded Foster Carer recruitment, an uplift in Adoption Social Work focus, new propositions for Special Guardianship Orders and Support Lodgings placements it is hoped that having local accommodation in Ceredigion can better support children and young people in need given family environments post-pandemic continue to present significant challenges.

## **Wellbeing of Future Generations:**

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why.**

Completed in December 2021 and will be updated once the placements have been identified and staff recruited in order that it reflects the final operational elements of the service.

## **Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:**

- Long term:** The provision of a cluster of safe accommodation settings will provide an opportunity for children who require residential care to remain in Ceredigion and is therefore a long-term investment in their future. This also provides opportunity to develop step-down models where appropriate from residential care to other types of provision, e.g., Fostering and Supported Lodgings.
- Collaboration:** Working with multi-agency partners and families to meet the local needs of children / young people.
- Involvement:** Engagement and consultation with stakeholders has and will continue to take place during the course of this proposal. As the provision becomes operational, there will be regular reviews through the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers (ISROs), Quality Assurance team. The Responsible Individual (RI) visits will take place ensuring that both the children/young people and staff are able to have their voices heard; supporting a compliant and quality focused provision.
- Prevention:** Providing safe placements and care for children / young people within Ceredigion rather than relying on out of county options (which with national demand as it is, can often be as far as Newcastle or Peterborough for the nearest emergency placement).
- Integration:** Working in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including health in ensuring timely access to required services as and when identified.

## **Recommendation(s):**

- To return to Healthier Communities Scrutiny and Overview in early 2025 providing more detail regarding impacts to the financial model for Social Care and progress with the implementation phase(s) of the provision.

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**Designation:**

**Date of Report:** 11<sup>th</sup> August 2024

**Acronyms:**