

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

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| Report to | Executive Committee |
| Date | 15/07/2013 |
| Subject | Invest to save proposal Child Placement Service |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | Councillor Kenneth Hughes |
| Lead Officer(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anwen Huws (IOACC) – Head of Children’s Services• Kevin Hawkins Principal Officer Corporate Parenting Children’s Services |
| Contact Officer | Kevin Hawkins Principal Officer Corporate Parenting Children’s Services |
| Nature and reason for reporting | |
| To request the Executive Committee’s approval for further investment in the Child Placement Service for additional resources to improve placement choice for children and reduce reliance on the purchase of external placements. | |

A – Introduction / Background / Issues

Whilst a small number of looked after children will need specialist residential facilities, Isle of Anglesey County Council is committed to providing those children who need to be Looked After by the Local Authority with high quality family based foster care placements locally, to meet their individual needs. The Fostering Service is based within Children's Services and is managed by the Operational Manager (Resources).

As at 19/12/2013 the service was responsible for 31 approved foster carers. 14 were approved as 'Kinship carers' for named children providing 9 long term placements and 12 respite placements whilst 17 families are approved for children generally and offering 30 placements.

The Isle of Anglesey is experiencing a shortfall of foster carer provision. The deficit has a direct impact on choice of placement for looked after children; permanence planning for children and retention of foster carers. The additional cost of purchasing placements from the Independent sector is significant and currently rests at 22 placements at considerable cost. Increasing the number of internal placements would reduce those costs by approximately 50% per placement.

The Local Authority position as a provider is therefore at odds with the increasing demand for Fostering Services. The shortfall in provision has been 'filled' by a growing private sector of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). It is commonly understood that the private providers can be flexible and responsive, but are usually significantly more expensive than internally provided Local Authority placements.

The Local Authority is often the first port of call for prospective foster carers. The Local Authority has to implement an effective recruitment and retention strategy. For this to be successful we need to adapt our service planning and delivery to one which offers a best value, high quality and responsive service to children, their families, children's social workers and foster carers. Increasing resources within the service will enable a more focused strategy which will improve our interface with the public of Anglesey and increase the availability of internal placements and reduce costs.

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| B – Considerations | |
| See Section 4 of Buisness Case – Appendix 1 | |

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| C – Implications and Impacts | | |
| 1 | Finance / Section 151 | While the actual level of savings that will be achieved is dependent on future performance, the proposal is soundly based, with the target level of |

| C – Implications and Impacts | | |
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| | | placements producing significant savings from Year 2 onwards. The additional cost incurred in Years 1 and 2 can be fully met if just over half of the target number is achieved. |
| 2 | Legal / Monitoring Officer | NA |
| 3 | Human Resources | NA |
| 4 | Property Services (see notes – separate document) | N/A |
| 5 | Information and Communications Technology (ICT) | N/A |
| 6 | Equality (see notes – separate document) | NA |
| 7 | Anti-poverty and Social (see notes – separate document) | N/A |
| 8 | Communication (see notes – separate document) | N/A |
| 9 | Consultation (see notes – separate document) | N/A |
| 10 | Economic | N/A |
| 11 | Environmental (see notes – separate document) | N/A |
| 12 | Crime and Disorder (see notes – separate document) | N/A |
| 13 | Outcome Agreements | N/A |

C – Implications and Impacts

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CH – Summary

The Business case evidences that in order to secure a range of sustainable foster placement options – both in terms of outcomes for children and cost – and reduce reliance on more expensive independent agency provision – a short terms investment is required on a spend to save basis.

D – Recommendation

For the Executive Committee to approve the invest to save proposal for further investment in the Child Placement Service to increase the number of internal foster placements for children and reduce costs.

E – Comments from the Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

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Name of author of report: Kevin Hawkins
Job Title: Principal Officer
Date: 10.07.13

Appendices:

1. Invest to save – fostering Report 19th February 2013

Background papers

Please see Appendix 1

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

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|-------------------------------|--|
| REPORT TO: | Executive Committee |
| DATE: | 15/07/2013 |
| TITLE OF REPORT: | Invest to Save Proposal |
| PURPOSE OF THE REPORT: | Seek approval for further investment in the child placement Service |
| REPORT BY: | Kevin Hawkins, Principal Officer |
| CORPORATE DIRECTOR: | Gwen Carrington, Director of Community |

1. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The Child Placement Team is seeking to increase the number of internally recruited foster families in order to provide children with local foster care placements and decrease reliance on the independent sector and therefore reduce costs.

As at 19/12/2013 the service was responsible for 31 approved foster carers. 14 were approved as 'Kinship carers' for named children providing 9 long term placements and 12 respite placements whilst 17 families are approved for children generally and offering 30 placements.

The Isle of Anglesey is experiencing a shortfall of foster carer provision. The deficit has a direct impact on choice of placement for looked after children and permanence planning for children. The additional cost of purchasing placements from the Independent sector is significant and currently rests at 22 placements at considerable cost. Increasing the number of internal placements would reduce those costs by approximately 50% per placement.

2. DISCUSSION – Refer to Appendix 1

Non Standard Agency Placements are those placements purchased from externally sourced providers. Non-standard agency costs vary between £672 and £1351 per week and during 2012/13 an estimated 7,796 nights of on standard agency foster care will have been commissioned.

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Estimated expenditure on non -standard placements for 2012/13 | £994,694 |
| Average unit cost per placement per night. | £127.59 |
| Average unit cost per placement per week. | £893.13 |

It can be seen that each child placed in an internal placement rather than an agency placement avoids an average additional cost of £467.05 per week and each child brought back to an internal placement produces a saving of the same amount. This would lead to significant savings in excess of £300,000 over the post investment period of three years and even more significant over the longer period.

| Year | Cumulative (Cost)/Saving |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 2013-14 | £45,421 |
| 2014-15 | £110,946 |
| 2015-16 | £469,263 |
| 2016-17 | £827,580 |

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Executive Committee to approve the invest to save proposal for further investment in the Child Placement Service to increase the number of internal foster placements for children and reduce costs.

CC-015195-RMJ/119742

Appendix 1

Invest to save - fostering.

1. Introduction

Whilst a small number of looked after children will need specialist residential facilities, Isle of Anglesey County Council is committed to providing those children who need to be Looked After by the Local Authority with high quality family based foster care placements that meet their individual needs. The Fostering Service is based within Children's Services and is managed by the Operational Manager (Resources).

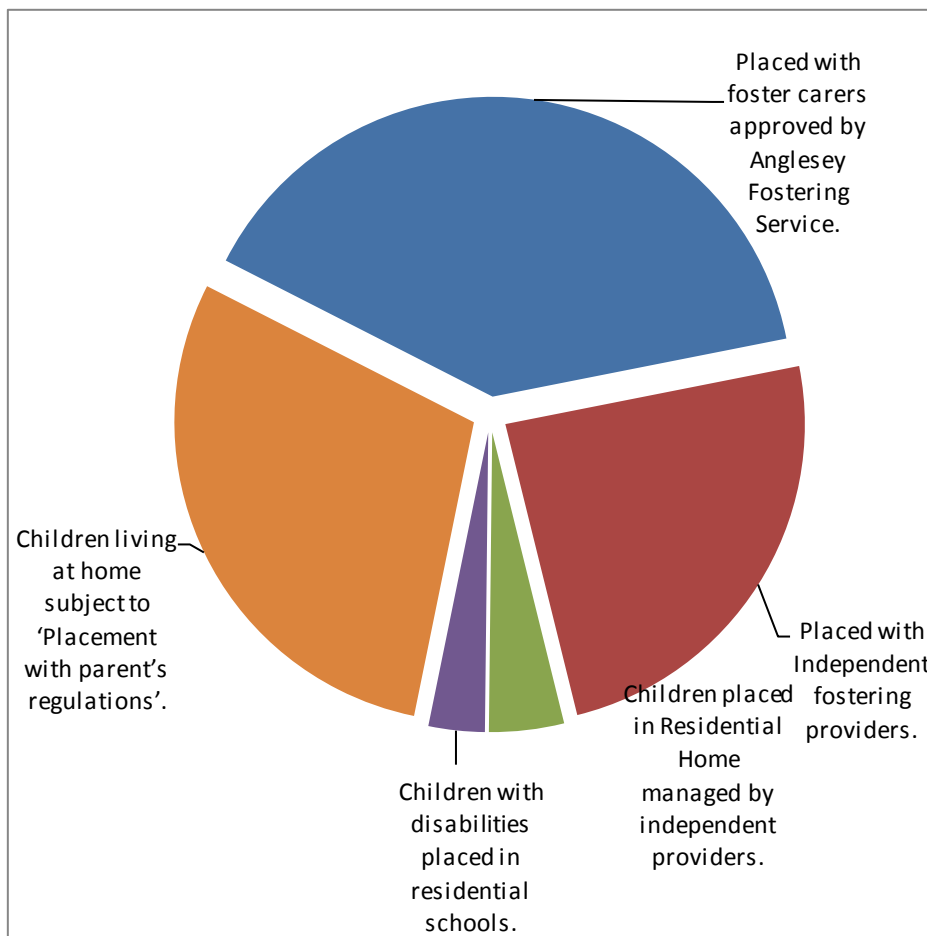
As at 19/12/2013 the service was responsible for **31** approved foster carers. 14 were approved as 'Kinship carers' for named children providing **9** long term placements and **12** respite placements whilst 17 families are approved for children generally and offering **30** placements.

By their nature, Kinship carers usually require more support and guidance by supervising social workers; the assessments are often more complex and take longer to complete.

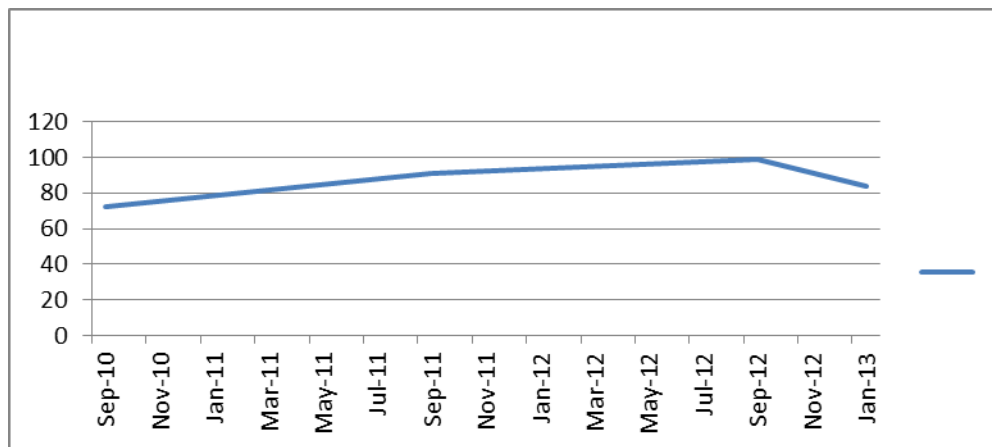
During the year a total of nine families were approved under regulation 38 Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 (An increase of 2 families on the previous year). Assessment for approval as foster carers commenced with seven out of the nine families and four of these have been approved and a further two families are in the process of being assessed. A full assessment was not required with two of the families as the children placed did not stay in placement. A full assessment commenced with another family but was halted due to safeguarding concerns.

As at 31th December 2012 the breakdown of 'Looked After' children was as follows:

| Placement type | Number of children |
|--|--------------------|
| Placed with foster carers approved by Anglesey Fostering Service | 37 |
| Placed with Independent fostering providers | 21 |
| Children placed in Residential Home managed by independent providers | 3 |
| Children with disabilities placed in residential schools | 2 |
| Children living at home subject to 'Placement with Parents. | 19 |
| Other (Adoption placement/missing) | 2 |
| Total | 84 |



The service has seen a general increase in the number of looked after children over the past three years with a reduction becoming evident over the past 6 months.

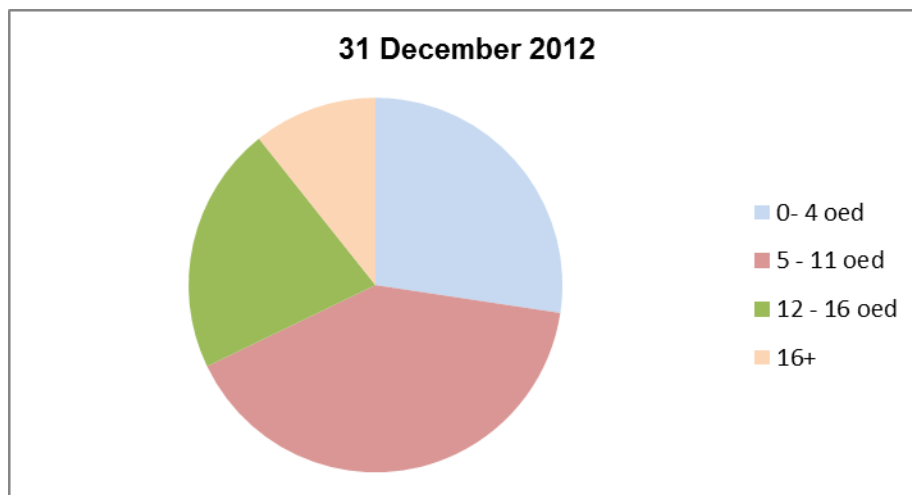


During the same period, the numbers of children placed with independent fostering agencies has increased from 5 in 2010 to 24 in 2012 with a corresponding increase in placement costs.

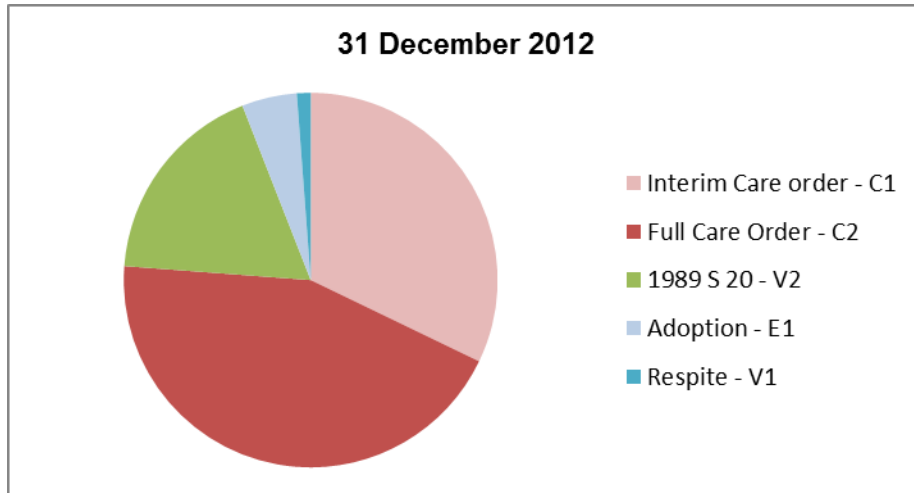
In addition, the authority's last remaining residential unit (5 Queen's Park Close) was closed in 2011 resulting in a reduction of 4 beds without the re-commissioning of residential beds or further investment in the fostering service at the time.

In modelling projected future LAC population, if the 3 year trend continues, an additional total of 10 placements will probably be required by 2015. However, care needs to be taken in modelling projections as Anglesey has seen a significant increase in the number of children placed under the Placement with Parents regulations (these children account for 23% of the total numbers of the LAC cohort). This figure is proportionately high and these cases should continue to be reviewed in order to assess a possible need for discharge of the Order.

The age spread for the LAC population is relatively even indicating that there is a need for additional placement across all age bands with a particular emphasis on the 5-11 cohort. 61% of the placements are for males.



In terms of legal status, the majority by far are on interim or full care orders.;



Local Authorities generally are experiencing a shortfall of foster carer provision within the fostering market place. The deficit has a direct impact for every local authority on choice of placement for looked after children; permanence planning for children; retention of foster carers; and cost outcomes.

The Local Authority position as a provider is therefore at odds with the increasing demand for Fostering Services. The shortfall in provision has been 'filled' by a growing private sector of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). It is commonly understood that the private providers can be flexible and responsive, but are usually significantly more expensive than the Local Authority counterparts- this issue affects all aspects of provision including the recruitment and retention of prospective foster parents.

The Local Authority is often the first port of call for prospective foster carers who consider offering this service. We need be able to implement an effective recruitment and retention strategy. For this to be successful we need to adapt our service planning and delivery to one which offers a best value, high quality and responsive service to children, their families, children's social workers and foster carers.

2. Recruitment

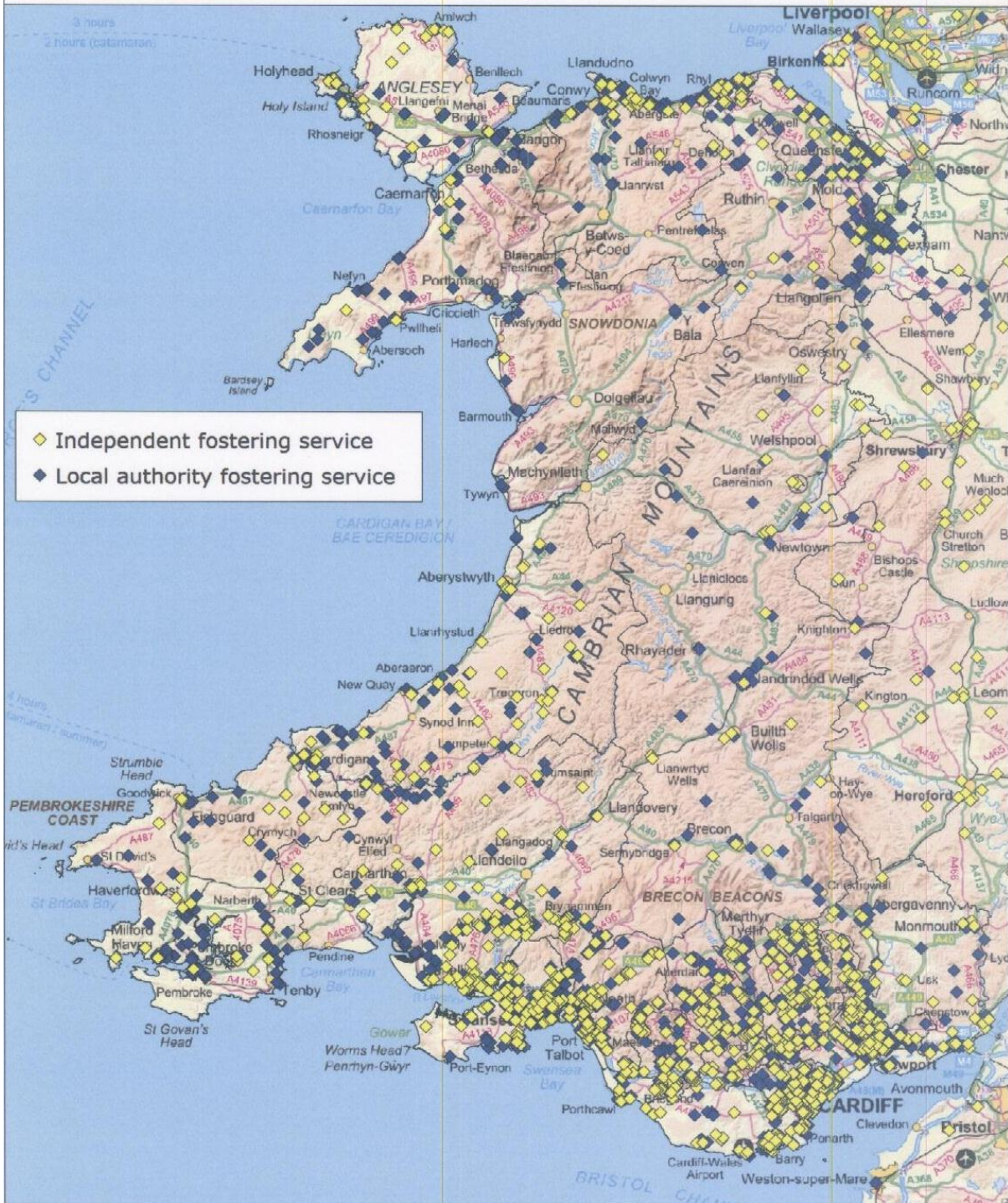
During 2011/12 there were fifty four initial enquiries regarding foster care.

Our final recruitment performance was:

| Number of families (15 in total) | Assessment approvals |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 3 | General Foster Care |

| Number of families (15 in total) | Assessment approvals |
|---|--|
| 5 | Kinship care under regulation 38 |
| 1 | Kinship care NOT under regulation 38 |
| 3 | Kinship care approved under regulation 38 but full assessment not required |
| 1 | Kinship care approved under regulation 38 and the full assessment is ongoing |
| 2 | General foster carers assessments on going and not been approved yet |

Fostering Services in Wales and bordering area, June 2012



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA UNIT ~ WALES

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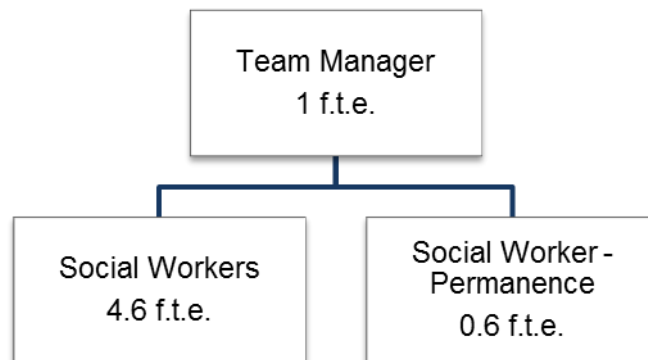
3. Key actions implemented during 2011/12 include:-

- Investments in the workforce. There has been a significant investment in terms of staffing within Children's Services with the addition of 1 f.t.e. post within the fostering team and the establishment of a .5 Principal Officer (Family placement and Corporate parenting) post. A number of Social Workers have been appointed within the service as well as senior practitioners. The service has recruited additional capacity in order to support new social workers in their first year in practice. In practice however the "added value" of these additional investments has yet to impact the family Placement service as the additional resources have been utilised to address staffing vacancies due to maternity leave and illness.
- A Quality assurance officer was also appointed to the service during the year and there is a quality assurance framework in place.
- Improvements in performance against a number of key areas underpinned by investments in key training.
- Improvements in performance management process and systems within the service.
- Developed opportunities with partner agencies to develop working relationships and clear understanding of roles/expectations.
- There is an aim to strengthen the development and understanding of members and senior managers with corporate responsibilities to understand the role and function of the Children services, how well they are meeting needs locally and give them appropriate priority
- The development of a written Fostering Recruitment Strategy for 2012/13
- Non Standard placements and out of county residential placements are managed by gatekeeping arrangements which include an accommodation panel and a senior accommodation panel for agency placements. All placements are authorised by the Head of Service.
- The Child Placement Team has introduced the new training plan for foster carers based on the Fostering Network Pathways Training. Further work needs to be undertaken in this area to ensure that carers have undertaken the basic training.
- Following the planned merger of Gwynedd and Mon Adoption panels in November 2012, the fostering panel was re-launched as the Fostering and Permanence Panel. Formal training on the subject of Planning for Permanence was held.
- A Permanence policy and procedure has been developed and formally agreed by CSMT. Training was held in 2012
- The Special Guardianship Policy and procedure was developed and implemented.
- Agency Decision maker compliance with Adoption Agencies (Wales) amendment regulations 2012 was achieved.
- The Private Fostering Policy has been reviewed and is awaiting approval by CSMT.

In addition, a regional project is currently being commissioned in order to:

- Develop a strategy that enables Local Authorities to maximise existing resource management to draw together a regional approach to ensure choice, capacity, and capability in the fostering carer market.
- Report on the current recruitment and retention practice within the six North Wales authorities.
- Compare and contrast existing marketing and recruitment plans with areas of best practice and describe and develop a regional marketing and recruitment plan.
- Describe a development strategy for how regional or sub-regional marketing should be implemented and managed which understands the need for a regional approach to be coupled to local sub-regional sensitivities.

2. Current Structure and capacity:



4.6 FTE social workers whose duties include:

- Recruitment of foster carers including attending promotional events
- Undertaking initial visits to prospective carers
- Assessment of foster carers
- Initial Training of foster carers (Skills to Foster)
- Support & Supervision to foster carers including support groups/Anglesey foster carers association
- Annual Reviews of carers
- Placement finding/duty for the team

- Private fostering

0.6 FTE Social Worker whose duties include:

- Viability assessments of prospective permanent carers
- Full assessments of prospective permanent carers
- Assessment/support/contact arrangements/reviews of permanent arrangements – SGO'S/Residence order.
- Placement finding/Duty for the team

At present, there is a significant staffing deficit in the team due to sickness, retirement and maternity leave.

There is no dedicated recruitment officer within the team, and therefore team members take on this work as their capacity allows them. Having a dedicated recruitment officer within the team for a short period during 2012 enabled the officer to attend shows/fun days/following up on enquiries etc. In order to recruit more foster carers, more work is required to get the service out and known in the community, to follow up on any enquiries and to keep in regular contact with enquirers throughout the recruitment process.

The capacity of Child Placement social workers available to assess foster carers depends on the nature of the work in hand at the time. However, it is generally thought that two on-going assessments per full time worker together with supporting foster carers and undertaking duty tasks is within that worker's capacity.

However, much depends on the individual caseload and complexity of the assessment. On occasions independent social workers undertake assessments for the team particularly complex friends & family assessments under regulation 38 (The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003).

3. Current Costs:

a) Internal placements

Budget 2012/13

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|---|----------|
| Family Placement Team | £208,740 |
| Fostering allowances/Travel equipment and panel | £655,080 |
| Training and other costs | £18,436 |

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| minus .06 permanency post | -£18,160 |
| Total | £864,096 |
| Average unit cost per bed per night: | £49.90 |
| Average unit cost per bed per week | £349.79 |
| Average unit cost per placement per week | £426.08 |

b) Non Standard Agency Placements

Non standard agency costs vary between £672 and £1351 per week and during 2012/13 an estimated 7,796 nights of on standard agency foster care will have been commissioned.

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Estimated expenditure on non -standard placements for 2012/13 | £994,694 |
| Average unit cost per placement per night. | £127.59 |
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It can be seen that each child placed in an internal placement rather than an agency placement avoids an average additional cost of £467.05 per week and each child brought back to an internal placement produces a saving of the same amount.

4. Options Evaluation.

a) Continue with the status Quo

Within current capacity it would not be easy to significantly increase the number of available placements. The current dependency on agency placements and the corresponding expenditure would need to continue.

b) Collaboration with other Authorities

There are several opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring authorities and discussions are ongoing with Cyngor Gwynedd in order to identify efficiency savings and increased performance within the following areas:

- Joint training strategies delivering savings on unit costs.
- Joint recruitment campaigns
- Shared areas of specialist expertise
- Joint fostering and permanence panel
- Carers Annual review and disruption meeting arrangements.

c) Externalise the Service

This is possible but based on current costs this would mean a significant increase in costs. Our current contracting arrangements do produce discounts of 1 to 2% in respect of sibling groups and multiple placements but a significant further reduction is unlikely.

d) Strengthen the internal Fostering Service

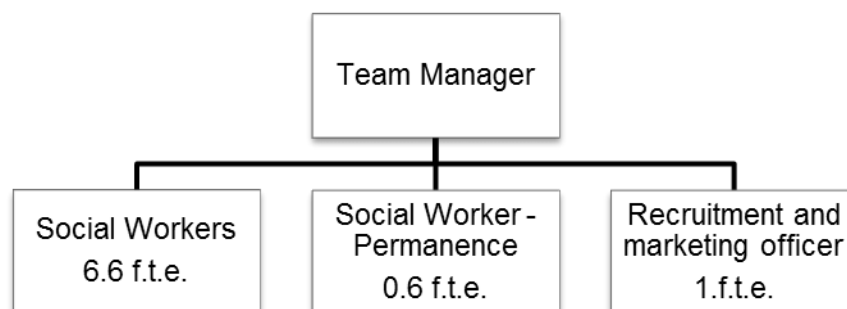
This is the only realistic option if the Local Authority is to increase placement choice, improve placement options (and subsequently improve placement outcomes for children) and reduce placement costs.

- The service needs a further 20 placements to meet current need and reduce the need to commission non- standard placements (15 additional sets of carers). Should the current numerical growth trend of the LAC population continue, an additional 10 placements will be required by 2016. However, it must be noted that not all of the children currently placed with agencies can be moved to new internal placements as they become available. Our analysis shows that without any further agency placements being made, within 3 years we will have 4 residual ongoing (long term) agency placements where a decision to move the

child would not be in his./her best interests. The aim must be to decrease the use of Agency placements for new care episodes.

- The initial recruitment of, and response to, interested families is crucial. Anglesey is not performing well in relation to generating interest and the % of eventual registered carers to enquiries is low at 4.8%. (9 registered carers from 54 enquiries but with 5 of these being kinship carers).
- Recruitment needs to be more focussed on age/needs of the LAC Population and a clear commissioning brief/analysis of this cohort needs to be completed to inform the recruitment strategy. In addition, targeted individual recruitment campaigns should be implemented with enhanced payment for long term sibling group placement.
- A realistic target is 10 additional placements (net increase) per year should to be set (allowing 60 hrs per Home Study)
- Placement support for 46 carers by 2014/15 and 65 by 2015/16 will need 2 additional support workers (18 each + new investment out of savings upon reaching target)

- Team Structure 2016



- The evaluation and possible commissioning of a salaried foster carers scheme in partnership with a third Sector partner. An Initial option appraisal has begun in Partnership with a Children's Voluntary Organisation.

- A recruitment process of 12 months from initial enquiry to registration needs to be established:
 - Enquiry to receiving information pack – 1 working day
 - Receiving pack to follow up contact – 10 working days
 - Follow up contact to initial visit – 20 working days
 - Initial visit to training and completion of statutory checks – 12 weeks
 - Training to allocation for Home study -10 working days
 - Allocation for home study to panel – 6 months

| | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2016/17 |
|--|--|--|---|
| Projected increase in internal placements | 0 | 10 | 20 |
| Projected no; of commissioned agency placements | 24 | 14 | 4 |
| Additional expenditure (Invest to Save) | £45,420.90 Recruitment and marketing officer @ Sc 5 £30420.90 Recruitment budget: £15,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Additional expenditure Recruitment support and retention | 0 | £86,432 Recruitment and marketing officer @ Sc 5 £30420.90 Recruitment budget: £15,000 1 additional S.W. post @pt 34-38 £41011.35 | £127,443 Recruitment and marketing officer @ Sc 5 £30420.90 Recruitment budget: £15,000 2 additional S.W. posts @pt 34-38 £82,022.70 |
| Increased LA Boarding out allowances to meet projected increase in internal placements | 0 | £221,561 | £443,123 |

| | | | |
|---|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Projected gross savings (agency placements) | 0 | £464,360 | £928,883 |
| Projected net savings | 0 | £156,367 | £358,317 |

| Year | Cumulative (Cost)/Saving |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| 2013-14 | £45,421 |
| 2014-15 | £110,946 |
| 2015-16 | £469,263 |
| 2016-17 | £827,580 |