

Planning Application

Supporting Statement – Reports

In support of our Planning Application to build single story dwellings on the site of Brynmorgan Villa to allow us to increase capacity, I have focused on some recent reports commissioned by the Welsh Government and the Children's Commissioner for England

Facts and quotes from 'Ministerial Advisory Group – Improving Outcomes for Children Programme 2019 – Welsh Government'

Between 2009 and 2019 Wales has seen an increase in Looked After Children of 46%

The First Minister has set the following goals:

- Reduce the number of children in care
- Reduce the number of children placed out of County
- Reduce the number of children placed out of Wales

It also states:

'Stable placements are crucial to providing children with a feeling of belonging and security – one of the key factors to better life chances and educational attainment'

Although we are a Welsh company committed to providing solutions for Welsh children and their families there is a similar situation in England. The Children's Commissioner for England states:

'13,000 children end up in unregulated homes at some point during the year'

Over the last 8 years there has been an increase of 42% of children going into care in England

In a recent meeting in January 2023 held by the Children's Homes Association, the Director of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource, a Welsh Government organisation coordinating residential care placements across Wales, stated that demand was exceptionally high and places in registered care homes were reducing. As a result, they reported that local authorities were now placing children in unregistered homes, who are not subject to the strict guidelines we adhere to.

Current position at Springboard Education and Care

We currently have 4 children placed with us, all from Local Authorities in South Wales. All 4 faced the prospect of being placed in care homes outside of Wales. All 4 have regular contact with family members facilitated by the home, which would not have been the case if they were placed outside Wales.

As we provide Care, Education and Therapy we have had little impact on local services i.e. CAMHS, education etc as we have an 'in-house' services to meet these needs. We have not referred any children into local schools and CAMHS oversee our service thus reducing the impact on their resources.

We are currently in discussion with a national fostering agency to develop a continuum of care which will lead to our children being placed within their Local Authority where it is possible, supported by our services.

We are currently receiving on average 12 referrals per day for a placement, a significant increase, all of which we are turning down to lack of capacity. All of these referrals are from local authorities in South Wales with several from Neath Port Talbot.

Since opening the home, over the last 18 months, we have not received any external complaints, with all other data highlighting the positive impact of the home on the community. In addition, we employ 19 full time staff and 7 further part-time staff. All of these staff members come from the vicinity of the home with us having an extremely low staff turnover. All our contractors; plumber, electrician, builder, carpenter, gardener, mechanic etc all also come from the local community, thus providing a significant economic stimulus.

The children are also involved in a variety of activities such as horse riding, rugby, volunteering, café visits, shopping, gym visits etc. all of which take place in the local community, thus again providing further economic stimulus. If we were successful in expanding our service these would increase proportionally.

Conclusion

The home has now been operating for 18 months and we have developed a positive working relationship with local authorities across South Wales. We are providing the children placed with us with long term stability and now wish to extend this to more vulnerable children, on a phased basis. The home has had a positive impact on the community and this expansion would extend this to a wider audience. This would align with Welsh Government objectives and help to meet the increasing demand for registered, quality placements that are so desperately needed at present.