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## Evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource: Interim Report



# **Evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource: Interim Report**

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 NATIONAL PICTURE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) IN WALES.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 USE OF THE CCSR .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4 DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CCSR .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5 PERCEIVED BENEFITS/OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT .</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6 FINDINGS FROM THE PROVIDER SURVEY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>FOOTNOTES.....</b>	<b>39</b>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In May 2011 the Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR). The aims of the evaluation are to assess the **impact and effectiveness of the CCSR** as a tool to contribute to improvements in placement stability for looked after children (LAC) and the strategic placement planning undertaken by local authorities (LAs) in Wales. This report presents the interim findings from the fieldwork undertaken up to the end of August 2011<sup>1</sup>.
2. This report is based on the findings from the fieldwork conducted to date which includes:
  - consultations with strategic stakeholders nominated by the Welsh Government;
  - consultations with individuals across 22 LAs;
  - an online survey of 103<sup>2</sup> private and voluntary placement providers;
  - analysis of data about LAC, the placement market and the use of the CCSR.

### Summary of Findings

#### Use of the CCSR

3. The CCSR is being used to varying degrees by LAs, ranging from frequent use as part of the overall placement process, to rarely, if at all. Only a small number use the CCSR comprehensively for all their placement searches. LAs are more likely to be using the CCSR just for those where an 'external' placement<sup>3</sup> is being sought and/or to meet specialist, residential or challenging needs. The data on the use of the CCSR shows that 67% of searches in 2010/11 involved selecting specific services: the most common were behavioural problems (54% of searches) mental health problems (24%) and substance misuse (19%).
4. It is more common for LAs to run 'care setting' rather than 'vacancy' searches to inform their placement planning; with the latter more likely to be undertaken in LAs outside of the SEWIC region in 2010/11. A number of the LA consultees questioned the value of vacancy searches because they are not perceived as being up-to-date, with some also questioning whether it is realistic to expect this from providers or a database facility given the importance of the provider conversation (for example, sometimes providers can 'create' a vacancy if they feel they can meet the specified need).

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<sup>1</sup> We are aware that there may have been organisational and technical changes that effect CCSR and the way it is used since the fieldwork was undertaken for this report, but the report is an accurate reflection of the situation at the time.

<sup>2</sup> Representing a 43% response rate.

<sup>3</sup> A placement with a private or voluntary provider, rather than in local authority in-house foster care or residential home.

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5. The SEWIC LAs (and more recently additional LAs in mid- and west Wales) have access to two additional functions on the CCSR – provider verification and placement tendering. Explicit use of verification in searches is not common (only 20% of searches conducted by SEWIC LAs in 2010/11 involved selection of a verification rating) and there appears to be some lack of clarity about the value or way in which this function can be used. Qualitative feedback suggests that the tendering function is used by SEWIC LAs following a search for external providers though there is also a suggestion in some areas that providers contact LAs directly by phone/email rather than always responding via the portal.
  6. Awareness and usage of the CCSR to access management information (MI) is relatively limited – only two LAs reported regularly using MI from the CCSR in a managed and strategic way though others had accessed the CCSR occasionally to keep track of and evidence historic searches for individual LAC. The SEWIC partnership also access and use MI from the CCSR to inform planning. Other reasons for using MI include assessing gaps in care and costs for placements to engage providers in dialogue about fees.

#### **Design, Implementation and Effectiveness of the CCSR**

7. Around half of LAs indicated a relatively positive approach towards using the CCSR for placement searches; a quarter had mixed attitudes and a quarter had negative views. Some functions were identified as facilitating the usability of the CCSR, including the case management function, the resources/document library and technical support from the CCSR team. However, the majority of consultees identified some challenges associated with the functionality of the CCSR, most notably:
  - **Quality/value of vacancy information:** LAs do not feel vacancy information is kept up to date and feel that in order for it to be useful, it would need to be updated daily, which is not a practical option;
  - **The selection criteria can hinder the search:** A range of issues were identified about the nature and specificity of the tick box criteria, which can result in misleading information or searches that are either too specific (providers not identified who could meet the child’s needs) or too broad (too many providers identified);
  - **Limited time saving:** Some LAs do not see the value in the search as they still need to call the providers to ensure a suitable match anyway;
  - **Unhelpful for emergency placements:** Some LAs find it quicker and easier to search the internet, email and/or phone providers when a quick decision is required.
8. Some LAs also highlighted concerns about usability, talking about “clunky” and “frustrating” processes.
9. Views on the day-to-day management of the CCSR are largely positive. LAs and stakeholders are positive about the support received from the CCSR Central Team and the vast majority of consultees within LAs have received at least one training session on using the CCSR.

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10. However there is a sense from both LAs and stakeholders that the initial drive and direction that was evident when the CCSR was first introduced has diminished. Alongside this there is a feeling that it has not met initial expectations and that there is a significant mismatch between expectations of what the CCSR was originally intended to do and the reality. This appears to have resulted partially from some views that initial plans were for the 'Support Resource' element to be more than 'just a database', to involve centralised staff experienced in the provision of care of LAC providing national support to LAs to source and locate appropriate placements.
  11. Other factors that have influenced usage at LA level include:
    - some feel that the implementation approach was too 'top-down', being centrally driven without enough consultation with LAs to identify their needs and how they might use it;
    - some remain somewhat mistrustful of the quality of providers contained on the database. Although the verification process is viewed positively by those in the SEWIC collaborative, there is still a prevailing preference amongst LAs to use providers with whom they have an established relationship;
    - information contained on forms such as Placement Forms and Care Plans can vary and is inconsistent across LAs. This therefore affects the consistency of information entered onto the CCSR.

#### **Benefits and Outcomes**

12. There are very mixed views about the benefits and outcomes arising from use of the CCSR, which are clearly influenced by overall general attitudes towards the CCSR and how it is used within LAs.
13. Overall, our consultations to date suggest that some of the initial expectations about the extent to which the CCSR might contribute to improved placement stability and strategic planning have not been realised. This is to some extent a function of those expectations being somewhat exaggerated for what is essentially a tool or resource to inform decision making. Equally, however, there are also issues around the extent to which the core functions of the CCSR have been fully developed or are operating effectively.
14. Nevertheless, the emerging findings point to some clear benefits arising from the CCSR – it is a good starting point or signpost for placement searches, an enabler of more informed decision-making, and contributes to the evidence base for the decisions made. Whilst one or two LAs felt that some contribution to improved placement stability resulted from these benefits, most felt that, whilst the CCSR contributes to decision-making, it does not and cannot impact significantly on placement stability. With relatively low awareness and use of the MI available from the CCSR team, only four LAs identified positive benefits arising from use of MI.

#### **Provider Feedback**

15. Most providers responding to the survey used the CCSR regularly and had a high level of satisfaction with its user-friendliness and functionality, and with the training provided by the CCSR Central team.

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16. Providers did not feel that the CCSR was being used by LAs and providers as effectively as it could be and had generally negative views about the contribution it had made to improving dialogue and discussion with LAs.
  17. Most providers felt that the CCSR is a useful resource for increasing LA knowledge about available placements. Around two-fifths of providers responding to the survey perceived that it may be making a contribution to better matching of placements and improved stability of placements for some LAC.

#### **Issues to Investigate during Case Study Fieldwork**

18. Based on the findings and issues raised at the interim reporting stage, we have identified a number of key issues to investigate further during the case study phase of the study, as follows:
  - A) **Up-to-date Vacancies?** A number of stakeholders said they thought that vacancies were not kept up to date on the CCSR. We will seek further clarity around whether these are perceptions or a reality. We will also investigate how often it would be necessary for providers to update the vacancy information if it was to be up-to-date on an ongoing basis;
  - B) **Grand expectations?** We will seek to understand in more detail what the initial 'grand' expectations for the CCSR were that stakeholders feel have not been fulfilled;
  - C) **Tick boxes:** We will investigate further what it is about the tick-box list that does not appear to work as effectively as intended. Is it that providers do not record the information correctly (ticking too many or not enough boxes)? Is it that information is not up-to-date? Is it that resource finders do not operate good search practices? Is it the design or nature of the tick-boxes?
  - D) **Internal use:** We will seek to establish why LAs are not commonly using the CCSR for internal placement searches. Would the CCSR be of more value in producing MI if used for internal searches? What internal systems do LAs operate instead of using CCSR?
  - E) **Not user-friendly?** We will investigate in what ways some users find use of the CCSR clunky and frustrating;
  - F) **Use of MI:** We will seek to understand better if and how LAs are using MI from the CCSR; and if they are not using it, how else they seek to understand which needs are the gaps in provision that they need to address.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 In May 2011 the Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the Children’s Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR). This report presents the interim findings from the fieldwork undertaken up to the end of August 2011. We are aware that there may have been organisational and technical changes that effect CCSR and the way it is used since the fieldwork was undertaken for this report, but the report is an accurate reflection of the situation at the time.

### Why was the CCSR introduced?

- 1.2 The Welsh Government grant funded the WLGA from 2005-2007 for the setting-up of the CCSR Unit. The grant covered both the business and systems functions being delivered by the Local Government Data Unit.
- 1.3 At a CCSR project board meeting held in November 2007, it was agreed that responsibility for the CCSR business and system support would transfer to Local Government Data Unit with effect from 1 April 2008 as part of steady state. Welsh Government agreed to fund CCSR steady state activities for a further three years commencing on 1 April 2008.
- 1.4 The CCSR was introduced as part of a wider package of policy changes and developments intended to improve market management, placement strategy and choice for looked after children. At the time it was introduced, the placement market for looked after children had seen a significant increase in independent sector provision, with associated increased costs, and local authority (LA) placement teams were undertaking a great deal of spot-purchasing, resulting in overspends. There was potential to improve: quality control; an increasing proportion of out-of-area placements; concerns about the level of placement mismatch and breakdown; and a clear need for LAs to grow and invest in foster carers to meet the changing needs.
- 1.5 It was therefore intended that the CCSR would support a change and cultural shift in LA planning – providing better market information to support both the initial placement matching for looked after children and wider planning decisions required to improve the provision available. It was introduced in advance of the development of regional collaborative partnerships across the South East, Mid and West and North regions of Wales and was expected to be a valuable information tool supporting the collaborative working and market management of these partnerships.

### **Outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC)**

- 1.6 Research on looked after children (LAC) has shown that they fare extremely badly in comparison with young people in the wider population. Education and employment outcomes are poor, increasing the risk of unemployment and homelessness<sup>i</sup>. The prevalence of mental health problems is much greater among the care population than among young people in the wider community, and LAC are disproportionately more likely to have problems of substance misuse and to become involved in the criminal justice system<sup>ii</sup>. Their educational progress and attainment may be poor, and rates of truancy and exclusion from school are often high, although this may vary depending on the stability of their care careers<sup>iii</sup>.
- 1.7 Both the Welsh and English governments have taken steps to improve well-being and outcomes for LAC. For example, in 2007 the Welsh Assembly Government strengthened regulations to ensure that local authorities provide appropriate services to meet the mental and physical health and education needs of LAC<sup>iv</sup>. A core aim of the CCSR is to contribute to improving outcomes for LAC.

### **Placement Stability and Choice**

- 1.8 The difficulties that children bring with them into care may be compounded by placement instability while they are looked after. Research has shown that even very young children may experience multiple placement moves<sup>v</sup>. Although mental health difficulties may increase the risk of placement breakdown, placement instability may be a cause as well as a consequence of children's difficulties. Similarly, placement instability often results in disrupted schooling, which may impact on educational progress and reinforce patterns of detachment from school<sup>vi</sup>.
- 1.9 Despite a recent reduction, many LAC in Wales continue to make frequent moves between placements. In 2009-10, 10% had three or more placements in a single year. The Children and Young People Committee of the Welsh Government has identified a number of causes of placement instability, including ineffective planning, inadequate assessment and the need, in many cases, to make emergency placements<sup>vii</sup>.
- 1.10 An increasing problem in Wales has also been the number of out-of-county placements being made – as a proportion of total placements this has increased from 8% in 1998 to 29% in 2009. This can be problematic as children lose their social networks; their education can be disrupted; and it can be more difficult to maintain contact with birth families and ensure continuity of health service.

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- 1.11 A lack of choice may make matching difficult, thus increasing the risk of placement breakdown and poor outcomes for children. However, matching may be difficult given the national shortage of foster carers and the small size of the residential sector. In this context, professionals may resort to the spot-purchase of placements without appropriate consideration of the resources available and without a sufficient focus on matching children's needs to placements. It was recently suggested that *"the placement of looked after children in Wales is driven more by a search for individual places for children than by an overview of the sorts of services that are needed, followed by plans to develop such services"*<sup>viii</sup>.

### **Placement Costs**

- 1.12 The costs of care placements account for a considerable proportion of children's services budgets. The costs of placements provided by the independent sector are particularly high, especially for residential placements<sup>ix</sup>. In recent years the costs of placements made by Welsh LAs have been spiralling, with little evidence of improved outcomes. Half of the 63% increase in expenditure on LAC between 2001 and 2004 was accounted for by the spot-purchase of less than 7% of placements in residential care<sup>x</sup>. The ten South East Wales Improvement Collaborative (SEWIC) directors recently reported that the proportion of expenditure on external placements grew by over 30% between 2005 and 2009, and that the purchase of fostering services from independent providers comprised one quarter of total spending on LAC<sup>xi</sup>.

### **The Role of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR)**

- 1.13 The development of the CCSR was prompted by concerns about stability and outcomes for LAC and also about overspends in children's services due to the high cost of placements in the independent sector. The CCSR is intended to be an effective tool to assist the process of finding available provision and matching it with children's needs. The aim is that it should inform, not replace, professional decision-making<sup>xii</sup>.
- 1.14 The CCSR was established in 2006 to support the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic framework for placement choice and stability<sup>xiii</sup>. Its initial purpose was to map independent provision across Wales and gain agreement of providers to provide information on the availability of placements, to help LAs find appropriate placements closer to the child's home area.
- 1.15 Its broader aim has been to encourage and facilitate the identification of strategic joint commissioning opportunities and improve market management for placements for LAC. It will do this by helping the 22 Welsh LAs to pursue a consistent regional pricing policy and carry out provider verification, monitoring and quality improvement. It offers a rich source of management information and market intelligence and has the potential to identify gaps and trends in service demand and provision. The potential benefits of regional commissioning have been indicated by the success of the SEWIC initiative in improving opportunities for collaborative commissioning and purchasing among ten Welsh LAs<sup>xiv</sup>.

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1.16 It was also intended that, as a national resource, the CCSR should increase opportunities for provider vetting to ensure placement quality. This may bring financial benefits. The Vale of Glamorgan achieved savings of over £1m following provider vetting through the SEWIC regional commissioning initiative and subsequent close engagement with preferred providers<sup>xv</sup>.

1.17 In the longer term, the aim is that the CCSR should contribute to the viability of collaborative commissioning to make best use of, and possibly develop, sufficient in-house provision. In this way, it can support the fulfilment of LAs' legal duties to co-operate in discharging their duties (Children Act 2004) and to securing sufficient provision for placements of LAC within their area and statutory notification for those placed out-of-area (The Children and Young Person's Act 2008).

### Functions of the CCSR

1.18 The **main purpose** of the CCSR is to **support placement searches** made by LAC placement teams within the 22 LAs in Wales. Key functions to achieve this are:

- **Provider Inputs/Updates:** Providers of care settings across Wales should input and update information about all the care settings they provide and the vacancies currently available. Providers include those that are independent (private or voluntary) and those that are managed in-house by the LA – across foster care and residential facilities;
- **Placement searches:** LA placement teams (called 'resource finders' on the CCSR) conduct searches of the care settings or vacancies to identify potential matches for LAC that they are seeking to place. The key pieces of information that are input about the care settings and can be specified as part of the search are:
  - **type of provider** – LA, private, voluntary; fostering, residential home, special school or family setting;
  - **characteristics catered for** – gender, age range, religion, ethnicity, language;
  - **geography** – through specification of postcode, miles radius, location and/or LA area;
  - **duration of placement;**
  - **facilities and services offered** – across categories of assessment services, behavioural problems, group placements facility, learning disabilities, mental health problems, physical disability, substance misuse, and therapeutic services.

The database will return a list of potential care settings or vacancies that match the selected criteria in the search.

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- **Case Management:** This enables the resource finders to identify, with a case number, each LAC that a search is undertaken for. It provides the ability to track search activity and provides an evidence base for the final decision made regarding the placement match. Use of case management became mandatory in a 2010 system release.

1.19 Building on these functions, the second broad purpose of the database is to provide **Management Information (MI)** about the placement market across the 22 LAs. This includes information about the number of searches undertaken, majority criteria requested, geographical area requested, type of provision and analysis of gaps/deficits from multiple search activity. This is currently available in the form of annual reports circulated to all; since April 2011 data on services required and the number of times care settings are selected was made available online for LAs and providers to view and benchmark against others.

1.20 In addition, for those LAs in the SEWIC collaborative (and more recently five LAs from the mid and west region), the CCSR provides two additional functions:

- **Provider Verification:** The collaborative partnership in SEWIC (plus five LAs in the mid and west area) operates a joint verification process with placement providers across the LA areas. Each provider is given a red/amber/green (RAG) rating based on various criteria including: staffing, finances, quality assurance processes, organisational structure and training provided. The ratings are included on the information about providers on the CCSR and there is the option for LA placement teams to select verification ratings as part of the search criteria (for example to only include those providers that have been verified as green providers in the search results);
- **Placement Tendering:** This enables LA placement teams to put each placement out to tender to a range of potential providers (as identified through one or more searches on the CCSR database). The search results can be reviewed to identify a short list that can be forwarded to the placement tendering facility. The LAs are required to upload tendering documents<sup>4</sup>. These identify the needs and intended outcomes for the LAC concerned. Providers are then required to respond within a stated timescale via the tendering portal.

1.21 Other subsidiary functions to LAs and providers are a bulletin board and document library.

### Evaluation Aims and Focus

1.22 The main aims of the evaluation are to:

- **assess the impact and effectiveness of the CCSR** as a tool to contribute to improvements in:
  - placement stability for LAC: by facilitating LAs identification and better matching of suitable placements;

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<sup>4</sup> SEWIC are seeking to standardise tender documents across participating LAs.

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- strategic placement planning: by providing management information to enable smarter collaboration between LAs in Wales;
  - consider the **potential for expanding the scope of the CCSR** to:
    - incorporate use of CCSR for all placements made by LAs, including those with in-house/LA approved foster carers or residential settings;
    - increase availability, accessibility and use of MI from the CCSR to support strategic planning;
    - incorporate provision for adult and specialist services.

1.23 It is important to recognise that the CCSR is a resource that is intended to facilitate and support improved decision-making regarding placements for LAC and provision planning. On its own it cannot impact directly on the placement stability and outcomes for LAC.

1.24 There is a wide range of factors that impact on placement stability - the child's emotional and behavioural problems; poor care planning; inappropriate placement; poor quality care; poor support to carers and a child's wish to return home. The CCSR provides information to support decisions around care planning and placement matches, but it is how the information is used, and the decisions and actions of those using it, that have the greatest impact on these issues.

1.25 The evaluation recognises this and focuses on understanding how the database is being used and how this might help and support better matches and improved stability. It does not seek to attribute the existence or use of the CCSR to any significant change in placement stability or other outcome data. We do present this data, however, to provide the context and setting for how the CCSR might support more strategic and operational actions which directly impact on LAC and their placements.

## Methodology

1.26 Our evaluation approach incorporates the following phases:

- scoping and design;
- strategic consultations;
- LA telephone survey;
- provider survey;
- in-depth case studies;
- analysis and reporting.

1.27 The following fieldwork has been completed to date:

- nine consultations with strategic stakeholders nominated by the Welsh Government. This includes organisations and individuals involved in the set-up and development of the CCSR from the outset;

- 
- 29 consultations with individuals across 22 LAs. Representatives from commissioning and placement teams have been consulted;
  - an online survey of 240 private providers. 103 responses have been received constituting a 43% response rate;
  - analysis of statistical information obtained from the StatsWales website relating to LAC across the 22 LAs, together with MI obtained from the CCSR Central team on levels of usage, searches made etc.

1.28 This report is based on the consultations, analysis of statistical information and provider survey. The final report will comment on the findings from the case study activity.

1.29 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Section Two:** National Picture for Looked After Children in Wales;
- **Section Three:** Use of the CCSR;
- **Section Four:** Design, Implementation and Effectiveness of the CCSR;
- **Section Five:** Perceived Benefits/Outcomes and Potential Implications for Future Development;
- **Section Six:** Findings from the Provider Survey.

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## 2 NATIONAL PICTURE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) IN WALES

- 2.1 In 2010, there were **5165 LAC in Wales, which represents just under 1% of the 0-17 population**. The number has steadily increased from 4200 in 2003. The characteristics and needs of LAC have also shifted over the last decade or so to include a larger proportion of older children and those that are more difficult to settle, with complex needs.
- 2.2 Across the 22 LAs, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Swansea as the largest population areas also have the largest number of LAC, but Neath Port Talbot, Torfaen, Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil have higher proportions of LAC, with LAC representing closer to 1.5% of the total population of children in these areas.

### Care of Looked After Children

- 2.3 The **vast majority of LAC are in foster care** (4050 in 2010 – 78%), with only 4% in residential homes<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.4 Care is predominantly provided through LA provision, though over the last 7 years, there has been an increase in placements provided by private and voluntary settings. In 2010, 23% of LAC were placed in private or voluntary care (foster or residential), compared to 19% of LAC in 2006 and only 8% in 2003. Our telephone consultations with LAs suggest that some LAs have been seeking, in the last few years, to reverse this trend, with a strategic focus on building in-house capacity and adhering to policies requiring management approval for any placement searches involving external providers.
- 2.5 Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff experience particularly high proportions of LAC being placed with the independent sector (45% and 32% respectively). Conversely, in Wrexham and Ceredigion no LAC were placed in the independent sector in 2010, and in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Conwy, Denbighshire and the Isle of Anglesey there were relatively low proportions (10% or less).
- 2.6 **25% of LAC in foster care in 2010 were placed outside of their LA area**<sup>6</sup> a similar proportion to 2006 (26%) but higher than in 2003 (18%). Whilst this gives some indication of capacity constraints within LA areas, it should be noted that some 'out-of-area' placements may be just over the border and may in fact still be close to family, school and health provision. The data do not enable us to make this distinction.
- 2.7 LAs that experience particularly high out-of-county placements for foster care include Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire. Conversely, Pembrokeshire, Wrexham and Conwy experience relatively low proportions, with Carmarthenshire and the Isle of Anglesey having no LAC in foster care outside of the LA area in 2010.

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<sup>5</sup> The remainder have been placed for adoption, are living with their own parents or others with parental responsibility, or are living independently or absent.

<sup>6</sup> This figure excludes those placed with family and relatives.

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## Placement Stability

- 2.8 There appears to have been **some improvement in stability of placements for LAC over the last 4 or 5 years**, with the proportion being placed in three or more placements within a year reducing from 13% in 2003 and 2006 to 10% in 2010.
- 2.9 In 2010, Wrexham and Merthyr Tydfil had particularly high proportions of LAC in 3 or more placements (24% and 18% respectively). Lower proportions were seen for the Vale of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Pembrokeshire (7% or less).

## Care Costs

- 2.10 The CCSR data indicates that the average cost of a care setting is around £890 within Wales, and this increases to £1,650 when including all care settings available. Settings outside of Welsh LA boundaries and those in the North West of the country appear to be more costly<sup>7</sup>. This compares to data collated by the CCSR Central team on behalf of the south east and mid and west LAs which shows average costs in March 2011 of £724 per placement for standard foster placements and £1,039 for non-standard foster placements<sup>8</sup>.

## The Placement Market

- 2.11 Using data from the CCSR itself, there are just under 4400 care settings available to LAC in Wales: this includes just under 3300 that are actually located within a Welsh LA border. Whilst just under half of the settings available are provided by private and voluntary providers, this reduces to around a third when looking only within Welsh LA boundaries.
- 2.12 It is a requirement for all private or voluntary providers wanting to offer placements for LAC to sign up to the relevant all-Wales Pre Placement Agreement (PPA) and this is used to encourage them to input and update care setting/vacancy information on CCSR. The minimum specification for CCSR also mandates that the LA use CCSR for searching for placements with external providers<sup>9</sup>. Information from the CCSR about the number of 'external' providers and care settings therefore is considered to be fairly accurate, though some issues were raised by LAs about the extent to which the information regarding vacancies in particular is (or can reasonably be expected to be) kept up to date.
- 2.13 There also appears to be information on the CCSR regarding much of the in-house LA provision care settings<sup>10</sup>, though it has not been kept up to date in the majority of cases, with significant care setting amends only being made in two LAs. It is likely that in the other cases there have been a number of changes and/or additions to in-house care settings over the period so we regard this information as providing a less accurate picture.

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<sup>7</sup> Caution should be taken with these figures given only 26% of care settings on the database give a care setting cost.

<sup>8</sup> Cost collation exercise conducted by the CCSR Central team, on behalf of SEWIC and the mid and west collaborative LAs, as part of a separate service level agreement.

<sup>9</sup> As we discuss in the next section, information from the qualitative consultations suggests this is not always the case.

<sup>10</sup> Prompted by a push a few years ago to update LA in-house provision, to provide the facility to produce maps of Wales or its regions showing the concentration or sparseness of types of care settings.

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### 3 USE OF THE CCSR

- 3.1 In this section we discuss how the CCSR is being used across the 22 LAs, who were consulted with regard to frequency and type of placement.
- 3.2 The CCSR is being used to varying degrees by LAs, ranging from frequent use as part of the overall placement process, to rarely, if at all. LAs are more likely to be using the CCSR for 'external placements' (when a placement cannot be found with an in-house foster care/residential home). They are also more likely to be using it for specialist, residential or challenging placements. Usage of the CCSR to access and make use of the available MI is also variable. Most commonly LAs are using MI to keep track of and evidence that searches have been made for individual LAC. Other reasons for using MI include assessing gaps in care and costs for placements to engage providers in dialogue about fees.

#### Usage of CCSR for Placement Search

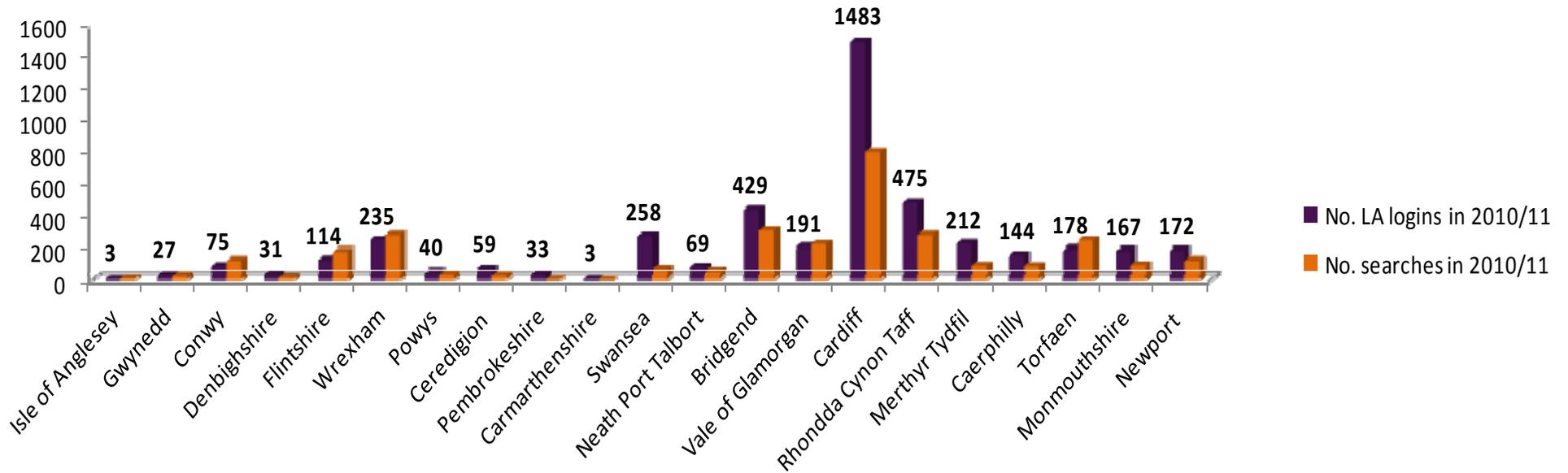
- 3.3 **Figure 3.1** shows the number of logins to CCSR together with the number of searches made by LA<sup>11</sup>. There is a wide difference in frequency of use across the 22 LAs.

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<sup>11</sup> Data obtained from the Local Government CCSR Central team in Wales (CCSR Central team)

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Figure 3.1: Usage of CCSR for Placement Search



- 3.4 As shown by **Table 3.1**, only one LA reported they do not use the CCSR at all<sup>12</sup>. A further seven LAs reported they rarely use the CCSR. Eleven LAs reported they regularly use the CCSR. Regular usage varies from once a month to 2-3 times a week.
- 3.5 The majority of LAs (15) are just using it for placements when they cannot use their own in-house provision. However five are using it for both in-house and external placements (the CCSR data shows that 28% of searches specified that they were looking for LA provision). A further two LAs indicated that they had put their own in-house provision on the CCSR but the information has not been updated and the CCSR is not used to search for LA provision.
- 3.6 Only three LAs use the CCSR to search for all types of placement. LAs are more commonly using it to search for placements that are **specialist, residential** or for LAC with **challenging** issues. Types of challenging placements frequently cited by placement teams included: older children/teenagers, mother and baby placements, challenging behaviour, sibling groups, fire setters, sexualised behaviour and those who had been in the criminal justice system. Data from the CCSR Central team supports this finding as 67% of searches in 2010/11 selected services that were specifically needed. The most common were behavioural problems (54% of searches), mental health problems (24%) and substance misuse (19%).
- 3.7 The majority of LAs are using the CCSR for planned placements. Seven reported they tend to use the CCSR as a 'last resort' indicating they didn't really like to use the CCSR as part of their usual approach to placement searches (using in-house provision or private providers they have an established relationship with).

**Table 3.1: LA Usage of the CCSR**

		No of LAs <sup>13</sup>
Regularity of use	Do not use	1
	Rarely	7
	Regular	11
Reasons for use	All placements	3
	In-house capacity issue	4
	Specialist	10
	Challenging issues	10
	Residential	11
Type of placements	External (i.e. private providers) only	15
	External and in-house	5
	Planned placements	15
	Last resort	7

3.8 Several consultees stated that they do not always search for vacancies, preferring to search for a suitable care setting who may be able to meet that child's needs and then see if there is a vacancy through discussion and dialogue. This is largely because the CCSR is not perceived as being up-to-date or flexible enough to show real-time vacancies and also because sometimes providers can 'create' a vacancy if they feel they can meet the need:

<sup>12</sup> We are aware that all LAs were required to put their in-house provision on the CCSR in 2009 and so believe that other LAs will have some in-house provision that had not been updated since this exercise.

<sup>13</sup> As these figures have been compiled from the qualitative consultations, the total does not always total 21.

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- *“Our job is about speaking to people to make sure we get the best placements for our people. We do our search on the needs of young people first, then establish if they have a vacancy”* (Senior Practitioner, Fostering Team);
  - *“Vacancies can be found by phoning up providers and discussing the details. Vacancies emerge through a discussion about need”* (Stakeholder).

3.9 Data from the CCSR Central team shows that just under half of searches (47%) in 2010/11 were vacancy searches, thereby corroborating LA views that care setting searches are more common. Interestingly none of the LAs who are more likely to run vacancy searches are in the SEWIC collaborative. It would certainly seem that LAs in the SEWIC collaborative have benefitted from working together and sharing information about the search process. We understand that these authorities are advised to run care setting searches because they are commonly using the CCSR to identify placements through the tendering process and searching only on vacancies available that day is not going to yield the best results. However, the qualitative consultations show that LAs outside of SEWIC still call up providers even if it shows they don't have a vacancy: they are becoming aware that searching by care setting can be more fruitful. This also raises the question as to whether the vacancy function provides value to users.

3.10 Use of the Individual Placement Tendering (IPT) and Verification Functions

3.11 Use of the Individual Placement Tendering (IPT) function is common amongst those LAs in the SEWIC collaborative. We understand that originally ten SEWIC authorities committed to using the tendering function, though actual usage does not completely reflect that.

3.12 Use of the verification function appears limited. The data show that only 20% of searches conducted by SEWIC LAs in 2010/11 involved selection of a verification rating. Some LAs reported they are searching providers classed as 'red' (see **Table 4.2**) in certain circumstances (which means that there are some critical issues that the provider needs to address before they can be fully verified). This suggests that LAs either do not fully understand this function and/or the market is so stretched that there are little consequences for being classed as red (should they be removed from the CCSR until the critical issue has been resolved?). One LA stated that they just would not use a 'red' provider. The extent to which the verification process helps to actually improve provision is therefore not clear. Consultation with the lead for the SEWIC collaborative highlighted that it is up to LAs to decide if the issue will affect the placement or not, and if they decide to proceed, they should write any counter measures for the risk involved into the contract. However there is clearly a lack of clarity amongst LA as to how the verification function should be used.

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### Usage of the CCSR for Access and Use of Management Information (MI)

- 3.13 Awareness and use of MI from the CCSR is variable. We assessed seven of the 21 LAs consulted as having a 'poor' awareness of the MI available, characterised by LAs citing that they had no knowledge of the MI available and had never used the CCSR to access MI. The main reasons for not accessing and/or using the MI from the CCSR include:
- lack of awareness and skills to access the MI: *"we don't know how"*;
  - already knowing the gaps and shortfalls in provision: *"we all know it's teenagers"*;
  - use of other sources to gain market knowledge;
  - lack of time;
  - CCSR is not user-friendly.
- 3.14 MI information for individual LAs has been available via the CCSR system since April 2011, but was manually produced and emailed to LAs before that.
- 3.15 Two LAs reported they hadn't used the CCSR directly to access MI but had received information from the SEWIC collaborative which they thought was based on MI available from the CCSR:
- *"We used some MI from SEWIC they had produced which benchmarked the LAs on the number of external placements made with private providers and the spend but we didn't get this from the CCSR ourselves"* (LA Service Manager and Commissioning Manager).
- 3.16 A further eight LAs had limited knowledge but had used the CCSR occasionally to access elements of MI for their own use. Only two LAs reported that they regularly used the CCSR to access MI, with a managed and strategic approach to this activity. Reasons for accessing and using MI include:
- assessing and evidencing the number of searches made per LAC to show to managers;
  - identifying gaps in care/provision;
  - assessing costs to engage providers in a dialogue;
  - geographical mapping of foster carers to identify areas with low numbers to target a recruitment drive.

### Use of the CCSR Central team

- 3.17 It is important to note that, although the CCSR is principally a database, it is also a service which includes staff time, materials and external contracts. There is a small group of individuals at the CCSR Central team who, amongst other things, can provide technical and administrative support for the CCSR. The team is able to respond to data requests as well as resolve queries. The vast majority of LAs have benefitted from training sessions delivered by the support team as well as other ad-hoc, telephone support which LAs are very positive about.

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- 3.18 The team also compile an annual report containing an overview of CCSR usage, searches made and types of vacancies available. Although a number of LAs were aware of this, very few knew much about the report or used it to inform their planning.
- 3.19 Consultation with representatives from the CCSR Central team has highlighted that additional requests for data or MI from the CCSR from LAs are minimal or non-existent amongst the majority of LAs. However the SEWIC collaborative has utilised the support of the data team<sup>14</sup> with a data collection exercise on the costs of placements for LAs who are members of SEWIC. The support team helped develop and distribute the template to relevant LAs which proved very useful for SEWIC. We discuss the benefits of this activity in more detail in **Section Five**.
- 3.20 The CCSR Central team is also in discussions with SEWIC to develop the CCSR database in line with the introduction of a new Framework Agreement for providers, which will be pan-Wales. The CCSR tendering function will be developed to support mini-competitions for the identification of providers to go on the Framework Agreement. Further proposed developments include the facility to record where placements have been made and support subsequent contract management.

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<sup>14</sup> Though through a service level agreement separate to the CCSR.

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## 4 DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CCSR

4.1 In this section we discuss views on the design and functionality of CCSR, barriers affecting the effective use of CCSR and perceptions on how well the CCSR has been implemented and managed.

### Design and Function of CCSR

4.2 Almost half (9) of the LAs consulted indicated a relatively positive approach towards using the CCSR, with seven having a managed approach to using the CCSR within their placement team:

- *“When we receive a referral we will initiate a search based on the information on the Individual Placement Tendering Form. Initially we will undertake a search of in-house provision. Although we know what we have, we have been told to use the CCSR. If we can’t find anything in-house we will extend the search to independent fostering or residential. If we don’t find anything with these then we seek permission to tender out”* (LA Resource Finder);
- *“There is an expectation in the LA that we use it for all searches”* (Family Placement Team Social Worker).

4.3 The following factors were felt to support the overall design and function of the CCSR:

- case management function:
  - *“This helps to investigate historic searches and achieve consistency within the LA”* (LA Resource Finder);
- resources/document library: useful for obtaining detailed information on providers e.g. inspection reports;
- being able to search by vacancy and/or care setting to increase the number of matches;
- the fact that all private providers are registered on the CCSR;
- verification function provides an added layer to aid selection;
- Individual Provider Tendering (IPT) function is speedy and fair;
- good technical support (from the CCSR Central team).

4.4 A further five LAs could be described as having a ‘mixed’ attitude. Typically this is characterised by LAs being happy to use the CCSR as an additional resource but do not consider it to be adding value or to play a vital part of the placement process:

- *“We look at the short-list that the CCSR produces after a search and I’ll see if ‘anything jumps out at me’. I will then see the social worker and ask them if they have any views on the providers they would like me to contact. I’ll then liaise with the preferred provider.”* (LA Resource Finder);

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- *“It’s not that useful for us because we’re such a small authority and we know our providers better than any database could give us information on”* (LA Commissioning Manager);
  - *“We tend to use it more on a Friday when we can’t get hold of our own providers”* (LA Commissioning Manager);
  - *“It’s nice to have but not essential”* (LA Commissioning Manager).
- 4.5 Six LAs are assessed as having a negative approach to the CCSR, citing they rarely used it and when they do it is ‘begrudgingly’ or when they are ‘desperate’:
- *“We use it when every other avenue has been explored”* (LA Resource Finder).
- 4.6 All LAs (including those with a positive approach towards using it) raised a number of significant challenges relating to the overall functionality and use of the CCSR. These have been summarised and presented in **Table 4.1**. Many of these act as barriers for usage and are affecting LA views on the overall effectiveness of the CCSR.

**Table 4.1: Barriers Affecting the Effective Use of the CCSR - LA Views**

<p>1. Vacancy information is not up-to-date</p>	<p>Overwhelmingly LAs felt this was the biggest issue associated with the CCSR. In order for vacancy information to be useful the CCSR would need to be updated daily, which is viewed as impossible and impractical as providers and placement teams do not have the time or the right knowledge in some cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“providers really struggle to keep the information up to date, so it has to be a two-way process of placement”</i> (LA Commissioning Manager);</li> <li>• <i>“providers and placement officers just don’t have the capacity to keep updating it every week”</i> (Senior Practitioner, Fostering Team);</li> <li>• <i>“if we looked for vacancies we’d be missing lots of opportunities to place because it’s simply not up to date”</i> (Placement Team Manager);</li> <li>• <i>“it’s not just about somebody having the time to update information but do they have the right knowledge and experience to make that information useful?”</i> (Stakeholder);</li> <li>• <i>“the database is not intuitive enough to show when a vacancy may become available”</i> (Stakeholder).</li> </ul>
<p>2. Preference for phoning providers still prevails</p>	<p>Even where the CCSR is deemed useful there is still a strong preference amongst LA placement teams to call providers instead of running a search. There is evidence that LAs do not see the value of the CCSR since there is still the need to call providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“we may get a vacancy from a search but that doesn’t mean the placement is suitable. I prefer to pick up the phone and speak to people”</i> (LA Resource Finder);</li> <li>• <i>“I fed back to the CCSR team that the CCSR is frustrating but they said that you still have to ring providers anyway. So why should I bother with it then?”</i> (LA Resource Finder)</li> </ul>
<p>3. Profiling information (tick boxes on LAC needs) is not helpful for determining placement suitability</p>	<p>LAs view the tick boxes to provide information on children’s needs as clunky, too specific, narrow, complicated or that there are too many:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“there is one category of cruelty to animals but in one case the cruelty was as a result of sexual abuse which cannot be captured by just ticking that box. To fill out some of the categories you need a lot of information but we don’t always have that. Stuff like Tourette’s or personality disorder. We just don’t know”</i> (Fostering Team Manager and Placement Coordinator);</li> <li>• <i>“the categories are not up-to-date with modern technology – e.g. there are no categories that refer to problems arising from use of Facebook or children looking at internet sites”</i> (Fostering Team Manager and Placement Coordinator);</li> <li>• <i>“someone who has a statement can also have a mild learning disability and people will interpret and search for these differently”</i> (Senior Practitioner, Fostering Team).</li> </ul>
<p>4. CCSR does not always identify suitable vacancies or care settings as a result of a search which was ‘too specific’</p>	<p>Data from the CCSR Central team shows that 15% of searches in 2010/11 returned zero results. The data also shows that 69% of the searches returned 10+ results, 50% returned 20+ results and 40% returned 50+ results. LAs have highlighted examples of where they have searched for a placement for a LAC knowing there were suitable vacancies or care settings but the CCSR has not identified them in a search. LAs have also emphasised that, the more specific they make a search, the less likely the CCSR is to return a suitable list with a broad search producing a long list: there appears to be no middle ground for an effective search.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“we tried to make a placement for a couple with drug/alcohol issues and their baby. When I logged onto CCSR the vacancy dashboard showed what looked like a suitable placement. However when I ran the search this provider did not show up on the search. I was told by the CCSR Central team to refine my search criteria which I did not find helpful”</i> (LA Resource Finder)</li> </ul>

**Table 4.1: Barriers Affecting the Effective Use of the CCSR - LA Views**

<p>5. Information entered onto the CCSR is open to interpretation and can be misleading as it does not give the full picture</p>	<p>LAs feel the CCSR is not flexible and does not allow for inputting or gaining detailed information that goes with a search. Providers and LAs use different terms and language for different types of need on placement forms and consequently on the CCSR. It is widely felt that a phone call is always still required to discuss the child’s needs, as the integration of CCSR with provider information is weak:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“searches for a particular child only brings up carers in the right approval range. This can be problematic: for example if we have a 10 year old child who functions as a 5 year old, we might want a carer approved for younger children, but the CCSR will only show carers approved for older children”</i> (Family Placement Team Manager);</li> <li>• <i>“Providers put male and female and for age they put ‘0-18’ so they need to give a proper age range. For example I placed a three week old baby with a carer without using CCSR who on CCSR gives an age range of 0-18. If I had searched for 0-18 providers I would have identified loads of providers, many of whom wouldn’t be suitable”</i> (Fostering Team Manager and Placement Coordinator);</li> <li>• <i>“they [providers] tend to tick all the options when in reality they can’t meet all needs. Conversely sometimes providers who can provide a placement find out later but weren’t on the shortlist – perhaps because they hadn’t given enough up-to-date information”</i> (LA Resource Finder).</li> </ul>
<p>6. Unhelpful for emergency placements</p>	<p>Some LAs do not find the CCSR helpful for making emergency placements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“when we need to find a placement straightaway it is easier and quicker to just email a list of eight agencies that we know. They call back if they have availability and we talk through the requirements”</i> (Social Worker, Child Placement Team);</li> <li>• <i>“it’s no good for emergencies: if we have a child sitting in reception and we need to find a place...what use is the database putting in all the information, getting a list of providers and then having to contact them? We just pick up the phone and call a few”</i> (Social Worker, Family Placement Team);</li> <li>• <i>“it is disjointed as when I hand over to the Emergency Duty Team after 5pm they do not have access to the CCSR and therefore they have to make decisions about placements based on a list that I provide them on a weekly basis”</i> (LA Placement and Commissioning Officer).</li> </ul>
<p>7. Re-tendering for specialist placements is often required but does not yield different providers: LAs can’t progress the search</p>	<p>A small number of LAs highlighted that when they re-tendered for a specialist placement they just get the same providers with little response. Therefore they have to start phoning around, which is frustrating.</p>

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- 4.7 There are some mixed views on the value of the verification status function (available to SEWIC LAs). Although there is a positive attitude towards this function in principle, there is limited evidence as to how this function is increasing the value and suitability of placements sought.

#### **User-Friendliness of the CCSR**

- 4.8 LAs varied in their opinions as to whether the CCSR was easy to use with six LAs openly stating they felt it was user-friendly. LAs highlighted four specific issues relating to the usability of the CCSR which they felt should be addressed:

- previous searches under the same ID number (case management function) cannot be removed without manual deletion. If a child leaves and re-enters the care system, previous searches under their case management number automatically show up again. This is frustrating as they have to be manually deleted<sup>15</sup>. This can make it tempting to start a new search with a different ID number, which is not good practice;
- not being able to search by a user-defined area: the CCSR allows for 3 distance/area based searches that cannot be combined (i.e. only one can be selected at a time) – LA area; as the crow flies radius from a postcode; or town/village (the latter only allows for exact searches where the provider/carer is in the specific town, not nearby). There is some dissatisfaction amongst some consultees that this does not meet their requirements: for example the ‘crow flies’ distance is not considered to be helpful, and some would like to put a town in and search in as the search term and around that town;
- lack of user-friendliness:
  - *“The CCSR is very cumbersome. It doesn’t flow; there are no arrows and too much scrolling”* (Social Worker, Child Placement Team);
- login process is laborious and frustrating: LAs highlighted that often they were logged out by the system during a session and found the login process lengthy<sup>16</sup>:
  - *“I don’t like using it. You need to re-login all the time”* (Fostering Team Manager).

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<sup>15</sup> The CCSR Central team have applied a fix to this issue which makes it quick to delete previous PMLs, though it is not clear that all users are aware of this.

<sup>16</sup> We understand that the CCSR Central team have improved the process for log-in and log-out timings in response to this feedback, though it is clear that the initial problems are still affecting perceptions amongst users.

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## Implementation and Management of CCSR

4.9 Views on the day-to-day management of the CCSR are largely positive. LAs and stakeholders are positive about the support received from the CCSR Central team. However, overall consultees feel that the initial drive for the CCSR has been lost, largely because there was a significant 'top-down' approach and because expectations were too high from the outset. As a result, views on the implementation of the CCSR are very mixed at LA level. There is clearly a more managed approach within the SEWIC collaborative.

4.10 As discussed in **Section Three**, seven LAs consulted are assessed to have integrated CCSR into their overall process and appear to have a more managed approach. It is notable that five out of the seven LAs are in the SEWIC collaborative with the sixth about to join. These LAs tend to perceive a much more driven approach to using CCSR as a result of being involved in the collaborative:

- *"It was actively promoted at Welsh Government level at the outset. Once it got going and LAs were critical of it Welsh Government said 'you asked for it – make it work'. LAs have actively promoted its use - in SEWIC it is embedded in operational practice"* (Service Manager for LAC);
- *"I don't see my LA or the Welsh Government as driving it, it's definitely coming from SEWIC"* (LA Resource Finder);
- *"I certainly perceive SEWIC as the main driver of CCSR. They have promoted the use of it a great deal"* (LA Resource Finder);
- *"Staff resisted it at first but it was made clear by the LA that it's here to stay. The culture has changed now"* (Commissioning Manager);
- *"A lot of developmental work has been done by SEWIC LAs including regular bi-monthly SEWIC meetings. These meetings have reinforced the benefits of CCSR to LAs and provide a drive for its continued use. It's part of our culture of working"* (LA Resource Finder).

4.11 Our findings highlight that many LAs, particularly those outside of the SEWIC collaborative, do not currently perceive a discernible 'drive' to use the CCSR. They do not see it as being promoted by either the Welsh Government or by senior managers within their own LA:

- *"CCSR has not been promoted and managed at a strategic LA level to date as it is not viewed as a productive use of their time"* (Fostering Team Manager).

4.12 A small number of LAs (2) highlighted that they felt the reason there wasn't much drive from within their own LA was due to a lack of awareness of the role and use of the CCSR:

- *"I don't think there is much understanding about the CCSR across my team managers"* (LA Resource Finder);
- *"I think there is a lack of awareness of the function and role of CCSR. I also think some in the LA consider the CCSR to be a magic system and people couldn't understand why we weren't using it"* (LA Resource Finder).

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4.13 Our emerging findings highlight examples however, within a small number of LAs that the culture of managing and driving CCSR has improved or changed over time:

- *“We set up the Permanency Panel because of the increase in the population of LAC. It was designed to achieve greater consistency and relationships across the different teams involved in supporting LAC. Prior to the panel the LA didn’t really promote CCSR use until it gained an understanding of how it could be used and where it can deliver. A lot of PR work had to be done with the fostering team as they had had previous negative experiences with CCSR”* (Commissioner and Resource Finder);
- *“When the CCSR was brought in we were told we had to use it but since the tendering process [IPT] was brought in it has reinforced its use. We use it as much as possible”* (LA Resource Finder).

4.14 Proactive encouragement by LAs to providers to use the CCSR appears to be limited, but it is happening amongst a small number of LAs, usually via telephone discussions about placements:

- *“We will always ask providers when we speak with them if they are on CCSR and will comment if their latest paperwork is not there or if they didn’t come up on a search”* (LA Commissioner and Resource Finder);
- *“I’ll generally encourage providers to update their information in talks with them and if I get sales calls from providers I will tell them about CCSR”* (LA Service Manager).

4.15 There is a sense from both LAs and stakeholders that the initial promotion of CCSR has diminished from when it was first introduced and that momentum has been lost. Some feel that it was very much a ‘top-down’ approach that was centrally driven without enough consultation with LAs to identify their needs. There is a strong perception from our consultations that the CCSR has not met original expectations and realised its initial ‘vision’ of being a central resource for all LAs, with a support team with knowledge of fostering and commissioning services.

- *“It’s a shame really, when we first started using it there seemed to be more potential”* (Family Placement Team Manager);
- *“There was certainly a strategic drive from the CCSR team/Welsh Government at the outset particularly via the regular regional meetings which provided training and information on the CCSR. However now we just get emails on updates on the CCSR system”* (Family Placement Team Manager);
- *“The original business case and expectations have not been fully realised over the seven years”* (Stakeholder).

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### Factors Influencing LA Usage of CCSR

4.16 Our analysis has shown there to be several wider factors that are influencing LA usage of the CCSR. These are summarised in **Table 4.2**. The main issues include:

- mismatch in expectations of what the CCSR set out to do compared with the reality. The general consensus of opinion is that at best the CCSR is a tool which can help the placement process. However LAs feel that the expectation that it can do more than this was exaggerated. LAs have emphasised that there is much more to placing a child than tick-boxes and a vacancy;
- mistrust in the quality of provision of 'unknown' providers;
- perception that the CCSR adds no value to the telephone discussion which must take place prior to a placement anyway;
- negative views of CCSR creating a culture which is passed to new members of the team;
- inconsistency of information on placement forms can vary which impacts on information transferred to the CCSR.

**Table 4.2: Factors Influencing LA Use of the CCSR**

<p>Mis-match in expectation and reality</p>	<p>Many of our consultees perceive the CCSR to have been ‘mis-sold’ in that it was introduced as something which could address some of the difficult issues in the sector such as placement stability, mismatch in supply and demand and the high proportion of out of county placements. LAs are somewhat sceptical about the time and resource which has gone into the CCSR and the relative value derived from it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“if something like the CCSR is to take root then it needs to win hearts and minds of the people on the ground. The CCSR was driven from the top. Although there was some consultation, there wasn’t enough questions asked at the LA level as to what would be useful for them”</i> (Stakeholder);</li> <li>• <i>“it’s a database, it doesn’t solve the problem</i> (Stakeholder);</li> <li>• <i>“there is much more to placing children than vacancies. That’s the least of their worries. We are talking about where a child is going to live”</i> (Stakeholder);</li> <li>• <i>“people didn’t understand its limitations and commissioning support was too ambitious”</i> (Stakeholder).</li> </ul>
<p>Quality of providers is not guaranteed with a mistrust in the quality of provision</p>	<p>This was more commonly raised by LAs not in SEWIC and who therefore cannot benefit from the verification process. However even LAs in SEWIC still felt that they needed to develop a relationship with providers and discuss the placement in detail before making a placement: there is a preference to use providers they already know. LAs still search for providers who have been flagged as red on the RAG rating if they are desperate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“there may be providers on there who have a very different ethos to what we want or are used to. For example we work with our preferred private provider as we have a working relationship and know that they have a policy of trying to get children back with their families as much as possible”</i> (LA Commissioning Manager);</li> <li>• <i>“we have some foster carers on our internal provider list that we wouldn’t touch with a barge pole yet other LAs from outside the area are placing children with them. The CCSR is no guarantee of the quality of providers and it can lead people to place too easily without doing the necessary checks”</i> (Senior Practitioner, Fostering Team);</li> <li>• <i>“the verification process is all well and good but you still have to trust it. Just because a provider is verified doesn’t mean it is suitable for that placement or child”</i> (Stakeholder).</li> </ul>
<p>Prevailing culture or process amongst LAs</p>	<p>The LA’s prevailing policy on the placement of children affects usage: for example if the LA has a policy on not using external providers apart from exceptional circumstances. Consultees also felt that the culture (either positive or negative) of their placement/fostering team very much determined their approach and views of CCSR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“we have one preferred provider and if we make a placement with the private provider or an out of county placement</i></li> </ul>

**Table 4.2: Factors Influencing LA Use of the CCSR**

	<p><i>we have to get permission from the Head of Service. Placing with private providers just isn't commonplace because of our ethos of training and using our in-house team"</i> (LA Commissioning Manager);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"a lot of it is down to habit. If I used CCSR when I started in my job I may have continued to keep using it but it needed to be sold to me and it wasn't so I got out of the habit"</i> (LA Resource Finder);</li> <li>• <i>"my predecessor said the CCSR was a white elephant"</i> (LA Resource Finder);</li> <li>• <i>"the promotion of the tool by one of my managers when I first started in post had been a key facilitator in encouraging its use as it encouraged people to get involved"</i> (LA Resource Finder).</li> </ul>
<p>Inconsistency of information on placement forms</p>	<p>A small number of LAs felt that they were also influenced by other challenges within the LA. The main example given was that forms are not consistent, with practitioners describing children in different ways and interpreting information differently. Placement forms and Care Plans can vary across LAs and this affects the information inputted onto the CCSR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"LAs have been told to sync the forms but this is a different team to us. Therefore it's hard to integrate everything and coordinate people. This will impact on the quality of CCSR"</i> (LA Resource Finder).</li> </ul> <p>A wider point was also made that describing children by their behaviour and problems is quite constraining. Describing children in terms of the desired outcomes might make use of the CCSR more effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"I think we should move towards asking providers who can meet the child's desired goals and outcomes. What does challenging behaviour actually mean? Saying that the child needs help to improve their attendance at school or to develop their relationship with their birth family would be better"</i> (Stakeholder).</li> </ul>
<p>Nature and type of LA</p>	<p>There was a sense that LAs who were particularly rural or very small did not find the CCSR very useful. They reported a sense of detachment and a prevailing preference for the fact they have always 'done their own thing':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"we're an LA that is fairly detached from the rest of Wales and we tend to do our own thing. I suppose that's why we're not using it... we just don't see the value of it"</i> (LA Commissioning Officer);</li> <li>• <i>"it's not that useful for us because we're such a small authority and we know our providers better than any database could give us information on"</i> (LA Commissioning Manager).</li> </ul>

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## 5 PERCEIVED BENEFITS/OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 In this section we detail the emerging views on how the CCSR has been used to benefit individual placement and commissioning teams within LAs in Wales. We also highlight how the CCSR has helped to contribute to the development of the SEWIC collaborative. We discuss the potential implications of these benefits and outcomes on the future development of the CCSR.

### Benefits and Outcomes

5.2 There are very mixed views about the benefits and outcomes arising from use of the CCSR, which are clearly influenced by overall general attitudes towards the CCSR and how it is used within LAs.

5.3 Overall, our consultations to date suggest that some of the initial expectations about the extent to which the CCSR might contribute to improved placement stability and strategic planning have not been realised. This is to some extent a function of those expectations being somewhat unrealistic for what is essentially a tool or resource to inform decision making. Equally, however, there are also issues around the extent to which the core functions of the CCSR have been fully developed or are operating effectively.

5.4 Nevertheless the emerging findings point to some clear benefits arising from the CCSR – it is a good starting point or signpost for placement searches, an enabler of more informed decision-making, and contributes to the evidence base for the decisions made. Whilst one or two LAs felt that some contribution to improved placement stability resulted from these benefits, most felt that whilst the CCSR contributes to decision-making it does not and cannot impact significantly on placement stability. With relatively low awareness and use of the MI available from the CCSR team, only four LAs identified positive benefits arising from use of MI.

5.5 Across the LAs consulted, six main benefits were identified as arising from availability and use of the CCSR, as detailed in **Table 5.1**:

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**Table 5.1: Main Benefits of the CCSR**

- 1) Awareness:** increased awareness and accessibility of information about external providers:
- *“a useful starting point and list of providers available”* (LA Resource Finder);
  - *“we have identified new providers through CCSR that were relatively local but weren’t on the approved provider list and now we have three placements with them”* (LA Commissioner and Resource Finder).
- 2) Choice:** wider choice of providers (particularly residential) and provision available to inform decisions:
- *“it has been incredibly useful for us: it’s a great backup, it points you in the right direction”* (LA Resource Finder);
  - *“it’s a great back up and highlights new providers or ones we haven’t heard of: for example for residential settings”* (LA Service Manager);
  - *“it has enabled us to talk to agencies we currently do not have a relationship with, particularly residential homes”* (LA Resource Manager);
  - *“we had a situation just last night where we had a request at 12.30am for a child who had a history of violence and other complex issues. By 3am we had secured the placement out of county which without CCSR would have been much more difficult”* (LA Placement Team Manager).
- 3) More informed decisions:** contributed to speedier and more informed decision-making:
- *“more standardised information about providers”* (LA Resource Manager);
  - *“more information about the availability of placements”* (LA Resource Finder);
  - *“we are working to change the established market”* (LA Resource Manager);
  - *“CCSR has contributed to our understanding that the fees we charge are less than other LAs which is useful to know as it contributes to our understanding of our expenditure”* (LA Resource Finder).
- 4) Stimulated discussion:** stimulated discussions and dialogue with providers:
- *“we negotiate more on price and conditions”* (LA Resource Finder);
  - (combined with other SEWIC developments) *“there is extended networking, increased transparency”* (LA Commissioning Manager);
  - *“it has extended our networking with providers and our overall level of services as a result of the improved dialogue”* (LA Placement Team Manager).
- 5) Evidence base:** CCSR has contributed to the evidence base for the ultimate placement decisions made – demonstrating the steps taken and discussions had to find the best suited placement for individual children:
- *“the MI is useful for presenting information to managers”* (LA Resource Finders);
  - *“CCSR has formalised our relationships with providers and it is better for evidencing what is coming back at us. It provides us with a structured contract with providers”* (LA Resource Finder).
- 6) Fairer Process:** In some LAs eyes CCSR has created a fairer platform for providers:
- *“the tendering process has helped improve our commissioning process for example everyone adhering to the same standards which make it far more uniform and equal”* (LA Resource Finder);
  - *“I think it is fairer as it puts providers on an equal footing and gives smaller providers a chance to provide services to LAs”* (LA Resource Finder).

5.6 Some of the LAs in the SEWIC region also commented on the value of the placement tendering function which has helped to speed up the tendering process in some cases.

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### **Contribution to Placement Stability**

5.7 Stakeholders consulted perceive that there has been limited or no contribution of the CCSR to placement stability. One or two LA consultees felt that some contribution to improved placement stability resulted from the benefits discussed above:

- *“For specialist provision the use of the CCSR has improved choice and decisions so that this has impacted on placement stability”* (LA Resource Finder);
- *“It has reduced placement breakdown in some cases”* (LA Placement Team Manager);
- *“It has helped to minimise out of area placements which may contribute to better stability”* (LA Resource Finder).

5.8 Most felt, however, that whilst the CCSR contributes to decision-making, it does not and cannot impact significantly on placement stability. This is because of the significant amount of work (and skills) required outside of a CCSR search to identify the best placement for individual children (as well as the complex range of other factors that impact on individual children’s placement stability):

- *“It cannot replace speaking to and visiting providers to establish the best quality placement”* (LA Resource Finder);
- *“There is much more to placing children than vacancies. That’s the least of their worries. We are talking about where a child is going to live. Vacancies can be found by phoning up providers and discussing the details. Vacancies emerge through a discussion about need”* (Stakeholder).

5.9 Around a quarter of the LAs consulted felt that the CCSR had no real positive benefits or impact, with a couple of LAs stating that they *“had never made a placement as a result of a CCSR search”*.

### **Benefits of the Management Information Function**

5.10 As highlighted in preceding sections there is relatively low awareness and use of the MI available from the CCSR team. As a result just four LAs identified positive benefits arising from use of MI, including:

- improved knowledge of the placement market, being able to identify gaps in provision and shape future provision;
- informing a dialogue with providers about costs, and being able to challenge the established market:
  - *“we have used it to identify gaps in our provision and to have a dialogue with providers about costs and how they vary”* (LA Resource Manager);
- benchmarking against other LAs: for example in relation to characteristics of LAC, or the number of external and out-of-area placements made.

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5.11 Most other LAs didn't really comment on the benefits or outcomes arising from MI given that they didn't have much awareness of it. A couple of LAs explicitly commented that it was of limited value as they already knew their gaps and shortfalls, other MI is available to inform the picture, and the quality of the information available could be improved. Some commented that they understood that the MI was useful at the SEWIC partnership level but they didn't use it directly themselves.

#### **Benefits of CCSR for the SEWIC Collaborative**

5.12 Those leading, and members of, the SEWIC collaborative have benefitted from the CCSR more than those outside the collaborative. The CCSR and the support team were viewed as tools and resources which could help the collaborative address the issues they had come together to address. MI from the CCSR and the support team has been used in the following ways:

- to identify the information on needs of LAC from the searches made;
- to identify the number of tenders made;
- to identify the baseline costs of placements (unit costs per LA and per provider). This was done every three months for the last two years. The CCSR Central team helped to develop a template and supported the data collection exercise<sup>17</sup>. As a result the collaborative has been able to negotiate a maximum charge for placements. Overall this has helped them achieve greater value for money and supported their commissioning strategy. However it is important to note that this work was additional to what is available to LAs direct from the database (it was a separate exercise).

5.13 Those in the collaborative who have spent time accessing and using the MI from the CCSR raised a small number of points which they feel may be acting as barriers to use for other LAs (in addition to those listed in **Section Three**):

- some lack of trust in the accuracy in the 'trend' information the CCSR produces;
- being able to see the number of searches made has limited value;
- annual reports are not helpful for LAs on an individual basis: they are unable to drill down to LA-level information;
- no information on where placements are made.

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<sup>17</sup> Though through a service level agreement separate to the CCSR.

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## Wider Developments

5.14 Our consultations with LAs and stakeholders also focused on how and whether the CCSR could be expanded in the following areas:

- **Encouraging more use of CCSR for in-house searches:** there appears to be limited support for expanding the use of CCSR to include all in-house provision. Most LAs not already using CCSR for this function felt that there would be no value in expanding use to include in-house searches. LAs commonly feel that they have good knowledge of in-house provision and a database could not capture the operational intelligence they have and need on a daily basis to make effective decisions; and one felt that it would *“slow down decisions on straightforward cases when more time should be spent searching for complex cases”*. Just a couple of LAs felt, conversely, that use for all in-house provision would help to demonstrate to others how the CCSR could be used as a management tool.
- **Expansion of the CCSR:** there was some, but not a significant, interest shown in expanding the verification and tendering functions currently operated in the SEWIC region to other areas; and some positive feeling about expanding the database to include adult and specialist provision. Feedback at this stage has focused more on the need to be realistic about what the CCSR can achieve and making improvements to current functioning to maximise benefits that are achieved with basic functions before consideration is given to further expansion.

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## 6 FINDINGS FROM THE PROVIDER SURVEY

6.1 In this section, we present the findings from the provider survey.

### Provider Survey - Key Findings

- 6.2 The majority of providers regularly used the CCSR, with half of providers using it at least three times a week.
- 6.3 The majority of providers generally updated information on the CCSR on an ad hoc basis. Information on provider organisations, care settings and current vacancies was updated by the majority (approximately three-fifths) of providers on a monthly basis or less. Use of management information was much less frequent.
- 6.4 Encouragement to use the CCSR was primarily driven by provider organisations and staff and the CCSR Central team.
- 6.5 There was generally high provider satisfaction with the user-friendliness and functionality of the CCSR. Providers were also satisfied with the ease of inputting and updating new vacancy information on the tool.
- 6.6 The assistance and training provided by the CCSR Central team was generally valued by providers.
- 6.7 Providers generally held negative views regarding the contribution that the CCSR had made to improving dialogue and discussion with LAs.
- 6.8 Providers did not feel that the CCSR was being used by LAs and providers as effectively as it could be.
- 6.9 There were mixed views as to whether LAs were committed to the use of the CCSR to source placements for LAC.
- 6.10 Views on the impact and contribution of the CCSR for better placement matching and stability were mixed, but broadly positive across providers.
- 6.11 Providers were supportive of the potential to widen the remit of the CCSR.

#### Response Rate and Profile of Providers

- 6.12 The provider survey was sent out to 240 providers in July 2011 and we received 119 responses, 103 of which were fully completed. This represents a good response rate of 43%<sup>18</sup>.
- 6.13 From the responses received:

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<sup>18</sup> The base number for each question is included in the tables.

- 89% (n=92) were private providers;
- 10% (n=10) were voluntary providers; and
- one provider was a LA provider.

#### Use and Value of the CCSR

6.14 The majority of providers had been using the CCSR since 2009 (52%; n=57). Over a tenth of providers (11%; n=12) had been using the CCSR since 2006, 7% (n=8) since 2007 and 13% (n=14) since 2008.

6.15 **The majority of providers regularly used the CCSR.** Half (50%, n=60) of the providers who responded to the survey used the CCSR at least three times a week. Of these a quarter of providers (25%, n=30) reported that they used the CCSR on a daily basis. However, a quarter (25%, n=29) of providers used the CCSR on a monthly basis or less.

	Number	%
Daily	30	25%
2-3 times a week	30	25%
Weekly	23	19%
Fortnightly	7	6%
Monthly	15	13%
Less than once a month	14	12%

6.16 **A small number of individuals generally used the CCSR within organisations.** For the majority of providers who responded to the survey the CCSR was used by 1-2 individuals within their organisation (72%; n=86). For just over a tenth of providers (12%; n=14) there were 3-4 individuals within their organisation who used the CCSR.

6.17 Providers were asked to specify what functions they used the CCSR for:

- 84% (n=98) of respondents used the CCSR for inputting and updating information about their organisation and the care settings available;
- 76% (n=89) used the CCSR for updating information about current vacancies;
- only 17% used the CCSR for obtaining MI.

6.18 Providers were then asked how often they used the CCSR for the functions specified above (see Table 6.2).

6.19 **The majority of providers generally updated information on the CCSR on an ad hoc basis.** Three-fifths of providers (60%; n=60) indicated that they updated information on their organisation and the care settings available on a monthly basis or less. Similarly, over three-fifths (64%; n=56) reported updating information about current vacancies on a monthly basis or less.

6.20 Obtaining MI from the CCSR was also an infrequent task. Over half (56%; n=9) of providers who used this function accessed MI less than once a month, and just less than a fifth (19%; n=3) indicated that they accessed this information on a monthly basis.

	<b>Inputting/Updating Information about Organisation &amp; Care Settings (Base=99)</b>	<b>Updating Information about Current Vacancies (Base=88)</b>	<b>Obtaining Management Information (Base= 16)</b>
Daily	2%	1%	0%
2-3 times a week	5%	5%	0%
Weekly	24%	23%	19%
Fortnightly	8%	8%	6%
Monthly	27%	39%	19%
Less than once a month	33%	25%	56%

6.21 The majority of providers kept information on their vacancies, organisation and service provision up-to-date and complete on the CCSR. Just over two-thirds (67%; n=74) reported that the information about their organisation and service provision was always up-to-date and 65% (n=65) reported that the information about their vacancies was always up-to-date.

	<b>Strongly Agree/Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The information about our organisation and service provision is always up-to-date	67%	16%	15%	25%
The information about our vacancies is always up-to-date	65%	15%	16%	4%
The information about our organisation and service provision is always as complete and detailed as it can be	65%	17%	16%	2%
The information about our vacancies is always as complete and detailed as it can be	65%	15%	16%	4%

6.22 **Encouragement to use the CCSR was primarily driven by provider organisations and staff and the CCSR Central team.** The majority (56%; n=56) of providers reported that they had been encouraged to use the tool by management and staff within their own organisation. A similar proportion (55%; n=55) indicated that they had been encouraged by the CCSR Central team and just over a third (35%; n=35) reported that they had received encouragement from their LA. Only 17% reported that they had been encouraged to use the CCSR by the Welsh Government.

#### **Satisfaction with the CCSR**

6.23 **There was generally high provider satisfaction with the user-friendliness and functionality of the CCSR.** Seven-tenths of providers (70%, n=77) reported that they were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the overall user-friendliness of the tool. Just over a tenth of providers (11%, n=12) reported being dissatisfied with the user-friendliness of the CCSR.

6.24 **Providers were also satisfied with the ease of inputting and updating new vacancy information on the tool.** Approximately three-fifths of providers reported that they were satisfied with these functions on the CCSR. Around a tenth of providers reported dissatisfaction with these functions on the tool.

**Table 6.4: Providers Views on Completeness of Information on the CCSR (Base=109)**

	Very Satisfied/Fairly Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied/Fairly Dissatisfied	Don't Know
Overall user-friendliness of the CCSR	70%	17%	11%	2%
Ease of inputting new vacancy information	59%	22%	13%	6%
Ease of updating new vacancy information	63%	20%	11%	6%
Ease of updating provider level information on the database	59%	21%	15%	5%

6.25 **The help and assistance provided by the CCSR Central team was valued by providers** (see Table 6.5). Over four-fifths (84%, n=91) reported being very or fairly satisfied with the help received.

6.26 The training received from the CCSR Central team on inputting data/using the tool was positively reported by over three-fifths (60%, n=66) of providers. However, there were a relatively large proportion of providers who reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the training (16%, n=17) or reported that they did not know (18%, n=19).

6.27 Over half (57%, n=61) of providers were very or fairly satisfied with the management and oversight of the CCSR by the support team. However, a large proportion of the providers who responded did not have a strong view on this, with nearly a quarter reporting being 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and nearly a fifth reporting that they did not know.

	<b>Very Satisfied/Fairly Satisfied</b>	<b>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied/Fairly Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Help/assistance provided by the CCSR Central team (Base = 109)	84%	6%	2%	8%
Training received from the CCSR Central team on inputting data/using the tool (Base = 108)	60%	16%	6%	18%
Management and oversight of the CCSR by the CCS Central team (Base = 108)	57%	23%	1%	19%

6.28 **Provider views on the communication from local authorities about the CCSR were mixed** (see Table 6.6). Just over a third (35%; n=38) of providers were satisfied with the communication, however over a tenth (14%, n=15) reported being dissatisfied. Half of the providers who responded (51%, n=56) did not have a view on the communication with local authorities about the CCSR.

6.29 Over half (56%, n=60) of providers reported being satisfied with the quality of information on the CCSR.

6.30 **Nearly two-fifths of providers (38%, n=41) were satisfied with the availability of MI on the CCSR to inform their own planning.** The high proportion of respondents who were not able to provide a definite view in response to this question suggests that there may be some issues around providers understanding of the availability of MI on the CCSR.

	<b>Very Satisfied/Fairly Satisfied</b>	<b>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very Dissatisfied/Fairly Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Communication from local authorities about the CCSR	35%	30%	14%	21%
Quality of information on the CCSR	56%	26%	9%	9%
Availability of management information on the CCSR to inform own planning	38%	33%	2%	27%

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### **Influence of the CCSR on Dialogue and Discussion between Providers and Local Authorities**

- 6.31 Whilst around two-fifths of providers held negative views regarding the contribution that the CCSR had made to improving dialogue and discussion with local authorities, more than one third felt the CCSR had contributed. Over two-fifths (41%, n=45) disagreed that the CCSR had increased dialogue and discussion with local authorities about available vacancies/individual placements. Responses were more mixed over whether CCSR had contributed to more effective dialogue with local authorities about placements (37% disagreeing, whilst 34% agreed; n=40).
- 6.32 Similarly, there are mixed views amongst providers about the CCSR contributing to discussions about information sharing: (37%; n=40) did not feel that the CCSR had contributed, whereas 34% did feel it had made some contribution.
- 6.33 For all the statements in **Table 6.7** below, a relatively high proportion (over a quarter) said they did not know. This may mean that some survey respondents use CCSR to update information but are not necessarily the people engaging directly with LAs.

<b>Table 6.7: Dialogue and Discussion between LAs and Providers (Base=108)</b>					
	<b>Definitely Agree</b>	<b>Tend to Agree</b>	<b>Tend to Disagree</b>	<b>Definitely Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Dialogue and discussion with local authorities about available vacancies/individual placements has increased because of the CCSR	7%	23%	21%	20%	29%
Dialogue and discussion with local authorities about available vacancies/individual placements is more effective because of the CCSR	9%	25%	22%	15%	29%
CCSR has contributed to an increased in discussion about information sharing between providers and local authorities	7%	27%	26%	11%	30%

### **Views on Effective Use of the CCSR**

- 6.34 **Providers did not feel that the CCSR was being used by LAs and providers as effectively as it could be.** Table 6.8 shows that over half (56%; n=61) felt that the CCSR was not being used as effectively as it could be by LAs and nearly two-fifths (39%, n=42) felt that providers were not using it effectively. There were however high proportions of respondents (32% and 41% respectively) who did not feel able to answer these questions.
- 6.35 **There were mixed views as to whether LAs were committed to the use of the CCSR to source placements for LAC.** Over two-fifths (41%, n=55) of providers felt that there was a commitment by LAs to the use of the tool, where as a third (33%, n=36) did not feel that this was the case.

6.36 A large proportion of respondents (30%, n=32) were not able to comment on whether they used CCSR to inform their planning of provision. Interestingly, just less than half (47%; n=51) of providers reported not using MI to inform their planning.

Table 6.8: Views on Effective Use of the CCSR (Base=108)					
	Definitely Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	Don't Know
The CCSR is not being used by local authorities as effectively as it could be	21%	35%	9%	2%	32%
The CCSR is not being used by providers as effectively as it could be	11%	28%	15%	6%	41%
Local authorities are committed to the use of the CCSR to source placements for looked after children	10%	31%	26%	7%	26%
We use management information from the CCSR to inform our own planning of provision	4%	19%	25%	22%	30%

### Impact of the CCSR

6.37 Views on the impact and contribution of the CCSR on better placement matching and stability were mixed, but broadly positive across providers (Table 6.9). Nearly half of providers (45%; n=48) felt that that the CCSR contributed to the better matching of LAC. Conversely, nearly a third (31%, n=33) did not feel that this was the case.

6.38 Providers felt that the CCSR was contributing to improved stability of placements for some LAC, with two-fifths (41%; n=44) agreeing that this was the case. However, three-tenths of providers (30%, n=32) did not feel that the CCSR had contributed to improved placement stability and over a quarter (28%, n=30) did not know.

6.39 **Providers were positive about the role of the CCSR in increasing LAs' knowledge about external placement vacancies.** Over three-quarters of providers who responded to the survey (76%; n=80) agreed that the CCSR was a useful resource for increasing LAs' knowledge.

6.40 A large number of providers did not feel able to comment on whether the CCSR was being used by LAs to inform their commissioning of placements (43%; n=46). However, over a third (38%; n=40) felt that the CCSR was not being used to inform their commissioning.

6.41 **Views on the impact of the CCSR management information on providers' development of provision for LAC were also mixed.** Nearly two-fifths of providers (39%; n=47) did not feel that the MI available on the CCSR was helping them to develop their provision. This is perhaps unsurprising based on the low numbers of providers who reported that they were accessing MI from the CCSR.

Table 6.9: Impact of the CCSR (Base=106)					
	Definitely Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	Don't Know
The CCSR does not contribute to the better matching of placements for looked after children	11%	20%	33%	12%	24%
As a result of better matching of placements, the CCSR is contributing to improved stability of placements for some looked after children	10%	31%	23%	8%	28%
The CCSR is a useful resource for increasing local authorities knowledge about our available placement vacancies	20%	56%	7%	5%	13%
The CCSR is not being used by local authorities to inform their commissioning of placements	12%	26%	16%	3%	43%
As a result of using the available management information, the CCSR is helping us to develop our provision in line with the changing needs of looked after children	4%	25%	27%	11%	33%

#### Future Development of the CCSR

6.42 **Providers were supportive of the potential to widen the remit of the CCSR** (see Table 6.10). Nearly three-quarters (74%; n=78) of respondents agreed that that CCSR should include all provision on LAC placements and vacancies. Over three-fifths (65%; n=68) agreed that there should be an increase in MI to support strategic planning activities and nearly three-fifths (58%; n=61) agreed that the CCSR should be extended to include specialist, Special Education Needs (SEN) or adult residential care.

Table 6.10: Impact of the CCSR (Base=106)					
	Definitely Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	Don't Know
The CCSR should include all local provision on looked after children placements and vacancies	34%	40%	7%	1%	18%
There should be an increase in the availability, accessibility and use of management information from the CCSR to support strategic planning activities	29%	36%	4%	1%	31%
The CCSR should be extended to include specialist, SEN or adult residential care vacancies	27%	31%	7%	6%	30%

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## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>x</sup> Children and Young People Committee (2009). *Inquiry into Placements of Children in Care in Wales*. Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales.

<sup>xi</sup> SEWIC Directors (2009). *Regional Commissioning Proposal to Cabinet*

<sup>xii</sup> Children and Young People Committee (2009). *Inquiry into Placements of Children in Care in Wales*. Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales.

<sup>xiii</sup> NaFW (2004). *Choice and Stability Developing a Range of Quality Placements for Looked After Children and Young People in Wales*

<sup>xiv</sup> Children and Young People Committee (2009). *Inquiry into Placements of Children in Care in Wales*. Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales.

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