

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ymchwil gymdeithasol
Social research

Number: 35/2012

www.cymru.gov.uk

Evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource: Final Report



Evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource: Final Report

Author: Georgina Cowen

Quality Assured by: James Whitley

**York Consulting LLP
Smithfield House
92 North Street
LEEDS
LS2 7PN**

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

For further information please contact:

Name: Janine Hale

Department: Knowledge & Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 02920826539

Fax:

Email: janine.hale@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Welsh Government Social Research, 2012

ISBN 978-0-7504-7988-2

© Crown Copyright 2012

CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT	1
2 USE AND VALUE OF THE CCSR	6
3 FACTORS INFLUENCING USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CCSR	16
4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Between May 2011 and February 2012 the Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR). The aims of the evaluation were 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 findings from the research and sets out recommendations and implications for the way forward¹.
2. The CCSR was introduced in 2006 as part of a wider package of policy changes and developments intended to improve market management, placement strategy and choice for LAC. Its **core purpose is to provide an effective tool to assist the process of finding available provision and matching it with children's needs**. CCSR is also intended to encourage and facilitate the identification of strategic joint commissioning opportunities and improve market management for placements for LAC. The core functions of the CCSR are to:
 - support LAC placement teams within the 22 LAs in Wales, through the provision of a searchable database of available placement provision and use of a case management function to track search activity;
 - provide management information about the placement market across the 22 LAs;
 - supply a placement tendering facility²;
 - record information from a provider verification process and allow searches to filter based on the verification rating³.
3. The **interim report for the evaluation (September 2011) found that:**
 - 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;
 - awareness and usage of the CCSR to access management information (MI) is relatively limited across both LAs and providers;
 - most providers responding to the survey used the CCSR regularly and had a high level of satisfaction with its user-friendliness and functionality, but most felt it was not being used as effectively as it could be by LAs or providers;
 - other stakeholders and LAs identified a range of design and implementation issues;
 - whilst the CCSR had not met initial expectations, there have been some benefits arising for some users: such as providing a good starting point or signpost for placement searches, being an enabler of more informed decision-making and contributing to the evidence base for decisions made.
4. The evidence from the research subsequently undertaken⁴ supports and develops the key finding that **the CCSR has provided some value but is not achieving its goal to have a significant impact on strategic planning or placement stability for LAC**.

¹ 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.

² 15 LAs were signed up for this at the time of the research.

³ Again 15 LAs were signed up for this at the time of the research.

-
5. The case studies provide further understanding of how **the CCSR is supporting the placement finding process for some users in some LA areas**, through for example:
- providing a database of available care settings and vacancies, primarily used to search for placements with external providers⁵ and for more challenging cases;
 - the tendering function available in some areas offering a useful mechanism for identifying placements where there is time for a planned approach;
 - information available from CCSR informing planning and decisions in a small number of cases.
6. They also highlight, however, **inefficiencies and inconsistency across LAs when using CCSR which impacts on overall effectiveness and impact**:
- the CCSR is not used comprehensively across or within the 22 LAs;
 - the CCSR sometimes holds incomplete and out-of-date information about the provision available;
 - there are inconsistent practices across LAs and providers when using CCSR for placement searches.
7. This inconsistent use and practice **limits the potential value of CCSR in supporting the process of finding the 'right placement' for all LAC** and in providing accurate management information:
- the evidence suggests that CCSR is only seen as being helpful in a small number of placement searches - for example in one LA case study: *"66% of placements are made without using CCSR"*;
 - variable practices in using and updating CCSR combined with differing interpretations of the selection criteria mean that:
 - placements searches on CCSR can yield unreliable information and therefore be of limited value to placement finders;
 - data on the gaps between demand and supply presents a limited and sometimes inaccurate picture.
8. There is a **range of inter-dependent factors that have prevented the CCSR from effectively meeting the needs** of all placement finders:
- aspects of **functionality**:
 - the selection criteria are over-ambitious in trying to pin-point rather than shortlist potential placements;
 - the CCSR is narrow in scope which limits its potential to support placement finding and commissioning practices (e.g. it does not allow searches for vacancies about to come up; nor does it currently record comprehensive information about placement needs, throughput and outcomes);
 - **usability**:

⁴ In-depth consultations in six LA areas, with placement finders, commissioners and providers.

⁵ That is private and voluntary providers, as opposed to in-house LA provision (internal).

-
- there is a lack of clarity and standardisation in the terminology and approaches to using CCSR, which undermines the value and reliability of searches and information;
 - some users feel the system is time-consuming and not overly user-friendly;
 - **leadership and direction** – in the last few years, implementation of the CCSR has lacked clear ownership, drive and direction, which together with some over-reliance on technical rather than whole-systems approaches, has resulted in some misuse and inefficiencies;
 - **engagement and awareness raising** – whilst positive feedback has been received about the training and support offered by the technical team, there has been a gap in general guidance, information and training that clearly understands end user needs and identifies how to make best use of the CCSR to support the placement finding process;
 - **unrealistic expectations?** - there are some questions about the realism of expecting the CCSR to have a tangible impact on placement stability, given that it is just one tool within a complex set of factors that influences being able to find the best placement for each LAC;
 - **historical and political factors** – there is a range of issues that have influenced roll-out and implementation of CCSR across Wales.
9. There are positive attitudes amongst some national, LAs and provider stakeholders that, whilst the CCSR has not fully realised its initial goals, ***“there is a place for CCSR....but not in its current form”***. There is a clear need to improve effectiveness and use.
10. The interlinked nature of the issues influencing its success means that it is difficult at this stage to set a specific path towards improved effectiveness. It is clear however, that the **first and major step required is to develop much clearer ownership, leadership and direction.**

Recommendations:

- 1) The CCSR could offer greater value to LAC placement planning and commissioning if clearer collective ownership and direction was provided across the 22 LAs. LAs should therefore identify (within the current developing structures for regional planning and commissioning) a resource(s) and/or facilitator(s) to more effectively lead and direct a whole-system based approach to improvement and implementation of the CCSR going forward.
- 2) Caution should be taken when considering the application of a CCSR-type approach to other contexts, such as for adults and specialist provision. Whilst there are positive attitudes towards the concept of a database of this nature supporting effective placement finding, there are significant lessons to be learnt from the implementation of CCSR.

Themes to address to develop a more effective tool:

- 1) Identify and communicate **a clear and re-focused goal**, which is shared across all LAs and users. At the validation event for this research stakeholders agreed that it should be: *“a tool to help find the best placement for all children in all cases”*. Questions to address include:
 - should it be used for both internal and external placement searches, or could it be just providing access to the national market for specialist provision?
 - should it be useful for emergency placements?
 - should it provide more information to inform commissioning - placement needs, throughput and outcomes?
 - 2) With the re-focused goal in mind, **address significant functionality and usability issues**, which might include, for example:
 - amending the selection criteria approach;
 - developing a more intuitive system – looking for vacancies in the future;
 - developing functionality to capture placement information – where made, outcomes, placement changes etc;
 - developing all-Wales use of the tendering function;
 - aligning with other systems/approaches (e.g. in-house social care systems).
 - 3) Develop an **effective change management approach**, for example:
 - redesigning the database to address the issues for Theme 2) above should involve the ‘end user’ to establish ‘what will be helpful for you?’;
 - addressing the variability in practices and increasing use of the CCSR across LAs and providers will involve:
 - changing attitudes and re-engagement at several levels across LAs and providers;
 - developing standard definitions, terminology and consistent practices;
 - offering clear and more relevant guidance, support and training, focused on the needs of placement finders, commissioners and providers;
 - we understand that the CCSR functionality is currently being developed to support the introduction of the pan-Wales Framework Agreement – there needs to be explicit and relevant guidance for LA commissioners and placement finders about how the existence of the Framework Agreement will affect use and searches on CCSR.
-

1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Between May 2011 and February 2012 the Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting to undertake an evaluation of the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR). The aims of the evaluation were to:
- **assess the impact and effectiveness of the CCSR** as a tool to contribute to improvements in:
 - placement stability for looked after children (LAC): by facilitating local authorities' (LAs) identification and better matching of suitable placements;
 - 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 management information from the CCSR to support strategic planning;
 - incorporate provision for adult and specialist services.
- 1.2 This report presents the findings from the research and sets out recommendations and implications for the way forward. 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.

About CCSR

- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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 LAC. At the time it was introduced, the placement market for LAC 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.

-
- 1.6 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 LAC and wider planning decisions required to improve the provision available. It was introduced in advance 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.
- 1.7 The main purpose of CCSR is to assist the process of finding available provision and matching it with children’s needs. Its broader aim is to encourage and facilitate the identification of strategic joint commissioning opportunities and improve market management for placements for LAC. In this way it is intended that it will help LAs in their goal to secure 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

- 1.8 The **core role** 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 facilities⁶;
 - **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.

⁶ Provision only goes onto CCSR if the provider explicitly signs up to the appropriate (foster or residential) Pre-Placement Agreement (PPA). The CCSR core team plays a key role in ensuring this is administered effectively.

-
- **Case Management:** This enables the resource finders to identify, with a case number, each LAC that a search is undertaken for. This 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.

1.9 Building on these functions, the second broad role 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.

1.10 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 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 then be forwarded to the placement tendering facility. The LAs are required to upload tendering documents⁷. 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.

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

Evaluation Methodology

1.12 Evaluation activities have included:

- scoping and design;
- strategic consultations – ten consultations with strategic stakeholders nominated by the Welsh Government, including organisations and individuals involved in the set-up and development of the CCSR from the outset;

⁷ SEWIC are currently seeking to standardise tender documents across participating LAs.

-
- data analysis – analysis of statistical information obtained from the StatsWales website relating to LAC across the 22 LAs, together with MI obtained from the CCSR support team on levels of use and searches made;
 - LA telephone survey - 30 consultations with individuals across 22 LAs, including representatives from commissioning and placement teams;
 - provider survey - an online survey of 240 private providers, with 103 responses representing a 43% response rate;
 - in-depth case studies across six LA areas - consultations with placement teams, managers of in-house provision, commissioners, Heads and Directors of Children's Services, and external providers of placement provision for LAC. Case studies were selected to include a mix in terms of location, population size, the size and nature of the LAC and placement market, and usage of CCSR;
 - validation event – a discussion of key findings and implications with some of the national stakeholders and individuals consulted during the case studies. At the event, York Consulting presented the key findings from the research and provided participants with the opportunity to offer further comment, clarification and validation. There was then further discussion focused on identifying potential implications and recommendations for the way forward.

Interim Report: Key Findings

1.13 In September 2011 the interim report outlined key findings from the stakeholder consultations, data analysis, LA telephone survey and provider survey. In summary, these were as follows:

- 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;
- awareness and usage of the CCSR to access MI is relatively limited amongst LAs and providers;
- most providers responding to the survey used the CCSR regularly, had a high level of satisfaction with its user-friendliness and functionality, and felt that it was a useful resource for increasing LA knowledge about available placements;
- however, providers did not generally feel that the CCSR was being used by LAs and providers as effectively as it could be;
- other stakeholders and LAs identified a range of design and implementation issues including:
 - perceptions that the value of vacancy information is limited by it not being kept up to date in all cases;
 - the nature and specificity of the selection criteria can hinder the search process;
 - some LAs felt the CCSR does not result in any time savings for placement finders in their search for the best placement;
 - some LAs felt the CCSR is not helpful in searching for emergency placements;

-
- overall perceptions indicate that whilst the CCSR has not met initial expectations, there have been some benefits arising – it has provided 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;
 - issues to investigate further during the case study phase include:
 - **Up-to-date Vacancies?** A number of stakeholders said they thought that vacancies were not kept up to date on the CCSR – are these perceptions or a reality?
 - **Grand expectations?** What were the initial expectations for the CCSR that stakeholders feel have not been fulfilled?
 - **Tick boxes:** What it is about the tick-box list that does not appear to work as effectively as intended?
 - **Internal use:** Why are LAs not commonly using the CCSR for internal placement searches? What internal systems do LAs operate instead of using CCSR?
 - **Not user-friendly?** In what ways do some users (particularly LA users) find use of the CCSR clunky and frustrating?
 - **Use of MI:** How, if at all, are LAs using MI from the CCSR and, if not, how else do they seek to understand the gaps in provision that they need to address.

1.14 This final report builds on the interim findings and draws on the evidence from the in-depth case studies and validation event to address the further investigation themes and present overall study findings, recommendations and implications for the way forward.

2 USE AND VALUE OF THE CCSR

2.1 The evidence from the six in-depth case studies supports and develops the key finding of this research that **the CCSR has provided some value but is not achieving its goal to have a significant impact on strategic planning or placement stability through better placement matching for LAC.**

Case Studies⁸ – Researcher Summary Statements:

1: A useful database in niche areas, helpful document/information exchange, increases awareness of providers and improves fairness in dealing with providers (tendering function). However, placement stability is a complex issue far beyond the means of a database to have a significant influence alone.

2: A sometimes useful provider list but not impacting on placement stability or contributing greatly to matching.

3: Use for internal⁹ and external¹⁰ searches, though main ‘real’ usage is for private placements when it is not possible to find one easily in-house. Mixed views on impact on placement stability but those on the ground think a contribution to improved stability for a small number of placements cannot be ruled out.

4: Use CCSR for external placement searches, but no placement actually made as a result of using it.

5: The tendering function supports the process of identifying the ‘right match first time’ for LAC and therefore contributes to improved placement stability for external placements where there is time to go through the process. The database itself does not add significant value.

6: Problems with using CCSR have been experienced in the past, but there is a commitment to using it in the future for “every single placement” if inefficiencies are addressed.

The CCSR supports placement finding in some LAs.....

2.2 The case studies identify how **in some LA areas the CCSR is supporting the placement finding process** – providing a tool to help with the planning and purchase of placements for LAC.

Database of Care Settings and Vacancies:

⁸ We have varied the numbering of case studies throughout the examples of the report to ensure that individual LA areas remain anonymous.

⁹ In-house LA provision.

¹⁰ Private and voluntary sector provision.

-
- 2.3 The CCSR provides a database of available care settings and vacancies to support placement searches. This has been used by LAs primarily for external placement searches and has been particularly valuable when seeking a placement for more challenging cases.

Case Study Summary:

- 1: Use CCSR for external searches only, particularly residential and specialist
- 2: Use CCSR for all external searches, can be useful out of area but not a common request
- 3: Use CCSR for external searches, positive experience in niche areas (disabled, challenging children, adolescents).
- 4: Currently use CCSR for all external searches, planning to use for internal in the future
- 5: Use CCSR for internal and external searches, has been particularly useful for challenging cases and where residential placements are required.
- 6: Use CCSR for internal and external searches, particularly useful for external residential placements.

Case Study Examples:

"We estimate that about 90% of searches are successful in that the CCSR returns a match list with one or more potential providers" (LA: Placement Finder)

"The CCSR provides a database of safe providers for challenging cases which is useful" (LA: Head of Children's Services)

"We had a boy who was difficult to place, his last two placements had broken down and he was in an education setting that wasn't suitable. After a search on CCSR we found a new provider who had also been recommended by a colleague. The placement has been successful" (LA: Placement Finder)

"Most placements are initiated through CCSR – we deal with a number of LAs" (Provider)

"CCSR is really helpful as it saves time trying to update all 22 LAs with the same information" (Provider)

"We found one agency through CCSR who we placed two children with in an emergency. The carers really embraced them and we didn't have in-house carers available at the time. We have left them there and have managed to negotiate a better price" (LA: Placement Officer)

"There is value in a database as we have all the information for provision in one place. It is particularly valuable for finding placements for those with special needs, though less useful for routine cases" (LA: Commissioner)

-
- 2.4 Some consultees identified that the CCSR had helped to increase LA awareness of the placement provision available – the maps of providers have resulted in a better understanding of the pattern of provision, leading to an increase in choice and supporting the development of provider relationships.

Case Study Examples:

“It is useful to know the relative position of provision across the LA” (Head of Children’s Services)

“We are talking to new agencies we have not previously had a relationship with” (LA: Placement Finder)

“The LA have found out about one or two private providers as a result of CCSR and developed a good relationship with them as a result, providing more choice” (LA: Commissioner)

“Care setting searches expand the number of opportunities and access to more providers; this ensures the LA is casting as wide a net as possible and not just going to favourite providers who the LA are already comfortable with, or those who have paid for publicity” (LA: Resource Finder)

“We have seen an increase in numbers of enquiries across Wales, and, though we cannot be certain it is because of CCSR, it is ahead of other databases on statistics and general transparency” (Provider)

“If there’s one advantage it’s a fair system. It gets away from preferred providers” (Provider)

“We have developed a good relationship with two new residential providers since using CCSR, which is positive” (LA: Placement Finder)

Tendering Function:

- 2.5 The tendering function, signed up to by 15 of the LA areas at the time of the research, offers a useful mechanism for identifying placements where there is time for a planned approach.

Case Study Examples:

“If there is time, the tendering facility helps to achieve the best match – as it requires providers to state clearly how they can meet the needs and provides social workers with information required to plan and make the decision” (LA: Placement Finder)

“The placement tendering function is very good – we have been successful in some of these and can see the value of it” (Provider)

“The CCSR tendering function is most effective when deadlines are given for 3-4 days away – any shorter than that is not long enough to action (so they use spot purchasing independent of CCSR) and any longer often means it is likely that the vacancy will already be filled” (LA: Placement Finder)

“It provides tracking information – who you’ve tendered to, when, responses and who awarded to (the agency) and you can send the contract via CCSR’s secure link” (LA: Placement Finder)

“It would be a problem if didn’t have the tendering function now for external placements. It’s valuable to send information to providers at the same time. It’s a fair and transparent process, allows equal access and helps providers respond more accurately” (LA: Placement Finder)

Information:

2.6 Information available from the CCSR has informed planning and decisions in a small number of cases. For example:

- in two case study areas, LAs have used MI about gaps between demand and supply to support provision planning, communication with providers, and recruitment and marketing activities;

“It is helping shape decisions about future placements – we have used information on trends and patterns in searches over the last 3-4 years and have compared our data with national statistics to get a view on capacity and deficiencies” (LA: Commissioner)

“MI summaries from CCSR team in the past have supported our regular recruitment and marketing drives in the past, but as we don’t get it quarterly anymore this is less useful” (LA: Commissioner)

“We have used the CCSR MI to show the need to look out of area as vacancies haven’t matched what we needed – this has helped to develop a better business plan for the LA” (LA: Commissioner)

- senior managers or those influencing decisions on whether to look out of area) the steps they have taken towards finding a placement - *“It provides evidence of the steps taken towards finding a placement for a LAC” (LA: Resource Finder);*
- a few users find the information exchange via the bulletin board and document function helpful;

“We use CCSR to look at the bulletin board, see which providers have been verified, obtain contact information for providers, and check inspection reports” (LA: Placement Finder)

“It’s good to have information upfront rather than half way through the process – the document library is useful for information about inspection reports, certificate registrations etc” (LA: Placement Finder)

“I use it to check if a new provider has signed up to the Pre-Placement Agreement. Also CCSR is useful for a referral where lots of information/documentation is needed, as the documents facility collates all this information into one place” (LA: Commissioner)

- some providers monitor referrals they receive on a regular basis to inform planning - *“We use it to monitor where referrals come from each week which helps with recruitment and marketing drives” (Provider).*

There are inefficiencies and inconsistency across LAs in the use of CCSR....

- 2.7 The case studies also highlight, however, a range of inefficiencies and inconsistency across LAs and providers when using CCSR, which impacts on overall effectiveness and impact.

Lack of Comprehensive Use:

- 2.8 The CCSR is **not used comprehensively** across or within the 22 LAs. The Interim Report for this study outlined that CCSR is used to varying degrees by LAs, ranging from frequent use as part of the overall placement process, to rarely, if at all. One LA does not use CCSR at all and seven reported that they rarely use the CCSR. Some providers consulted during the case studies supported the finding that use across LAs is variable – *“All those in SEWIC use CCSR and are instructed to do so. One or two non-SEWIC areas still don’t use it at all” (Provider)*

- 2.9 Only **five LAs use CCSR for both internal (LA in-house) and external (private/voluntary) placement searches**. The case study evidence shows that the primary reason for not using CCSR for internal searches is greater confidence in internal systems and knowledge of carers. There is also evidence from the case studies that, when **internal searches are undertaken, this is sometimes tokenistic** as it is *“alongside our own system, which delivers better results”*.

“We use it because we are told to, but it duplicates processes as our internal mechanisms are better. We have a placement meeting every Monday where we talk about children that need placements – within our team we know the carers, their personalities and who might be a good match. This is a better matching approach than through an automated system” (LA: Placement Finder)

“Searching for in-house providers on CCSR is a bit of an exercise and tokenistic. We have a white board with in-house vacancies showing on it and low-level need placements can be found with a quick phone call. It is the high risk placements that make us turn to the CCSR” (LA: Placement Finder)

-
- 2.10 Some consultees from the case studies also indicated that, whilst CCSR is **used for external searches, it is not always considered a valuable exercise**:

"We have to use CCSR to identify providers because we are told to, but we know who they are already; we could just as easily do our own list of providers to send tenders to" (LA: Commissioner)

"We have an internal weekly spreadsheet, which provides more information than CCSR as it includes respite care and placements where it's been necessary to move a child between carers" (LA: Placement Finder)

"We search on each external placement (because we are required to), but do not anticipate generating useful results and do not always wait for results before starting to make calls" (LA: Resource Manager)

- 2.11 Most of the case studies also indicated that the **CCSR is not used or seen as helpful for emergency placements**:

"If we have a child sitting in reception, 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" (LA: Placement Finder)

"If I'm placing a child at 10.45pm I am looking for straight answers, which an online programme cannot provide" (Provider)

"We wouldn't use tendering in an emergency – it takes about 4 hours to go through the process of searching and sending out tenders. We therefore just contact agencies we have on a list" (LA: Placement Finder)

"The tendering should in theory work in an emergency but it doesn't because: a) provider information is sometimes out of date; b) it's not clear in the email alert that an emergency deadline is impending; and c) providers receive lots of similar emails and lack resource to deal with them straight away" (LA: Placement Finder)

- 2.12 However, it should be recognised that there have been regional and Local Authority efforts to reduce the incidence of emergencies. Tendering would not be seen as being appropriate and no one from the CCSR core team promotes it in this context.

- 2.13 Explicit use of the verification function 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. We understand, however, that the new pan-Wales Framework Agreement will replace the verification rating process.

Incomplete Information about Provision:

- 2.14 The CCSR sometimes holds **incomplete and out-of-date information** about the provision available because:

-
- **few LAs update the information about the care settings or vacancies for their in-house provision** – the Interim Report outlined that, whilst information about in-house LA care settings was initially entered onto CCSR in an exercise a few years ago to support the production of provision maps, significant updates and amendments have only been made by two LAs since then;
 - **updates about vacancies by external providers are variable.**

Examples of providers not updating:

“One provider has not opened the home yet but is advertising vacancies on CCSR” (LA: Placement Finder)

“The providers I speak to tell me they don’t have time to keep information up-to-date” (LA: Placement Finder)

“Our local big provider tends not to keep vacancy information up-to-date, as there is no need to given that the LA contacts them directly” (LA: Placement Finder)

“In some cases, we do not remove vacancies from CCSR straight away when they are taken up – reasons include: a) risk of placement breakdown in early stages – we do not consider a placement filled until at least 3 weeks into the placement; b) other priorities – our own systems and ensuring carers get paid may take priority over updating CCSR” (Provider)

“We update every 2-3 months though we should do it at least monthly” (Provider)

“We do not put vacancies on CCSR – we have our own list that we send to LAs” (Provider).

Examples of providers updating:

“As a small provider dealing with lots of LAs we need to keep CCSR up to date – we update daily” (Provider)

“CCSR is a starting point for successful referrals and it is crucial to our business because most placements start off on CCSR” (Provider)

“We update every 2-3 days and focus on ensuring the start dates are accurate or if a carer’s approval status has changed. We are confident that it is as up-to-date as it can be” (Provider)

Inconsistent Practices:

2.15 In addition to the variable practices for placement searches and updating highlighted in the report previously, the case studies highlight a range of other **inconsistent practices** across LAs and providers when using CCSR, including:

- there are **varying interpretations and use of the CCSR selection criteria** across LAs and providers – further detail is provided in our discussion of selection criteria in **Section Three**;

“Some providers tick everything, then use subcontractors to fill gaps” (LA: Placement Finder)

“In the early days we used all the tick boxes and selected vacancies, but we wouldn’t get results or we’d get results that were inaccurate (i.e. not real vacancy). Also the detail in the risk assessments and care plans are difficult to match/fit to the tick boxes. We therefore adjusted our use to always search on care settings and use just basic tick boxes. The tendering process then allows for more detailed understanding and meeting of individual child’s needs” (LA: Commissioner) [Nb: We understand that this is how the CCSR central team and SEWIC recommend operating the tendering function]

- LAs are **variable in their encouragement of providers to use the CCSR** – whilst one or two do insist that all contact for placements is via CCSR, providers report that this is not always the case;

“We send an email update of vacancies to LAs, as it’s quicker than updating CCSR. Only one LA has told us not to send it as they think we should be using CCSR” (Provider)

“One LA uses CCSR quite regularly and encourages providers to use and update CCSR as much as they can, but we don’t get this from other LAs. Previous relationships still stand and can sometimes override the CCSR” (Provider)

- LAs have **responded in different ways to initial frustrations with unhelpful search results** (which have included nil returns, or lists of vacancies which in the event did not exist) – some have adapted their search approach to focus on care settings rather than vacancies and minimise the use of selection criteria; others have chosen not to use the system as often;
- **smaller LAs** with fewer external providers operating locally have **less incentive or need to use CCSR**;
- **cost pressures within LAs to find in-house provision reduces the need to use CCSR** in those LAs that do not use CCSR for internal searches;

“Our real usage is for private placements when a place cannot be easily found in-house” (LA: Placement Finder)

“Use of CCSR has reduced recently due to an in-house recruitment drive as part of a cost saving drive by the LA” (LA: Commissioner)

“Senior managers’ focus is on keeping things in-house – so sometimes even if the carer is not approved for the specific needs, we will look to place with them and change their approved status” (LA: Placement Finder)

know we won’t get a good result from CCSR”.

Inconsistent Use and Practice Limits the Potential Value of CCSR in Finding the 'Right Placements' and Providing Accurate MI

- 2.16 The inconsistent use and practice associated with CCSR limits its potential value in supporting the process of finding the 'right placement' for all LAC and in providing accurate management information.

Only Helpful in Small Proportion of Placement Searches:

- 2.17 The evidence suggests that **CCSR is helpful in only a small number of placement searches.**

Case Study Examples:

"66% of placements are made without using CCSR"

"9 of 175 LAC were placed using CCSR"

"We have never made a placement through CCSR"

"We use CCSR for all external searches but we mostly don't anticipate or achieve a useful result from this mechanism"

Unreliable and Inaccurate Information:

- 2.18 The variable practices in using and updating CCSR, combined with differing interpretations of the selection criteria, means that:

- **placements searches on CCSR can yield unreliable information** and therefore be of limited value to placement finders: for example offering lists of vacancies that don't exist when providers are called, or nil returns when placements can be found through a phone call;
- MI on the gaps between demand and supply **potentially presents a limited and inaccurate picture** – that is, a nil return doesn't necessarily mean there is a gap, given that:
 - search information is input for only a very small proportion of actual placement searches conducted (mostly external);
 - there are variable interpretations of the selection criteria and each case is complex/individual;
 - there are variable updating practices;
 - users have adjusted selection approaches due to continually getting nil returns: this leads to an imprecise understanding of needs.

Case Study Examples:

"When we contacted the providers suggested by a search, the places weren't available anymore but the providers would offer alternatives that weren't suitable for the young person's needs, so we stopped using CCSR" (LA: Placement Finder)

"For a recent example, I was looking for a residential placement and phoned providers who came up on the match list but they didn't have a vacancy. As the issue started to become an emergency, I phoned two providers I know but who were not identified on the match list and they had suitable vacancies but hadn't come up on the match list. This doesn't fill me with confidence that when I'm doing searches in a planned way that I'm getting the best placement for that child" (LA: Placement Finder)

"When looking for a placement for a girl on remand awaiting trial, the CCSR search yielded few appropriate results, but when we started phoning providers, vacancies that were not on CCSR were in fact available, implying that provider information on CCSR is not always up to date" (LA: Placement Finder)

"In the training we were using a live case and were trying to find a match for someone who had a range of aggressive behaviours (verbal and physical and a history of fire setting). We put in the relevant searches and nothing came up, which really demonstrated the issues for us" (LA: Placement Finder)

"50% of our searches get a zero return if we tick all relevant boxes" (LA: Placement Finder)

"When we first started using it, we would go through the whole process and not find anything, then pick up the phone and find something" (LA: Placement Finder)

"We asked to go see an LA to observe how they use CCSR. We ran a fictional search and we realised we had suitable vacancies but we didn't come up on the match list" (Provider)

"We do not believe MI would be accurate due to providers and LAs using CCSR inconsistently" (LA: Commissioner)

"I value the annual reports but have concerns about accuracy, given different use by LAs" (Provider)

3 FACTORS INFLUENCING USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CCSR

3.1 There is a range of inter-dependent factors that have prevented the CCSR from effectively meeting the needs of all placement finders. We outline these below under the following headings:

- functionality;
- usability;
- leadership and direction;
- engagement and awareness raising;
- realistic expectations;
- historical and political factors.

Functionality

Selection Criteria:

3.2 The selection criteria incorporated in the form of tick-box questions on CCSR are over-ambitious in trying to pin-point, rather than shortlist, potential placements. Feedback is that the tick-boxes are too numerous, too specific, and open to interpretation. They oversimplify complex issues and unique individuals and circumstances.

“Because every child is unique, it’s not possible to capture everything in categories” (LA: Commissioner)

“A database for social care is the most challenging type of database because it’s so individual for every case and that’s the problem” (LA: Placement Finder)

“If we tick the fire starter box, many providers would rule the young person out full stop because of the risk in multiple children settings. However, if providers understand the issues better, there may be more options for placement – qualitative description or discussion of the issues might reveal that the fire was started on a mountainside urged on by peers 6 years ago and never done since – so whilst consequences are high risk, likelihood is minimal” (LA: Commissioner)

“The second page of CCSR requires placement finders who don’t know the young person to make a judgement from the paperwork they receive – it’s a big responsibility and a massive stumbling block relying on placement finders’ judgement of what is mild, moderate, or severe. Placement finders are therefore advised not to tick anything at all, leaving the matching wide open from the start” (LA: Commissioner)

“The categories are too general and trying to achieve something that can’t be done. They pigeon hole too much. What ‘challenging behaviour’ means to one person is different to what it means to another – so it’s too difficult to define and be specific. Whereas, a provider reading the risk assessment and care plan together gives them a better understanding of needs and how they can/can’t meet them” (LA: Placement Finder)

“From a providers point of view, the categories on CCSR are so broad you have to be careful not to put yourself at a disadvantage by the boxes you tick” (Provider)

“We are sometimes frustrated that, for referrals that we might be interested in, we find out about them too late in the process because the LA haven’t selected certain criteria on CCSR and/or we haven’t selected certain criteria when describing our provision” (Provider)

“CCSR can only provide basic information without evidence – and local knowledge and subjective detail on quality have to be given over the phone” (Provider)

- 3.3 In some LAs, placement finders have gained more value from doing a basic search which does not use all the selection criteria – they then have a shortlist to discuss further with (or tender to) individual providers¹¹:

“We did use more criteria initially but this really restricted the match list. We now also do a search for basic provision, selecting age, gender, type of provision, verification status and other specifics (e.g. group placements), but don’t do any other tick-boxes as it is time consuming and it is better to provide the risk assessment and care plan with the tender so providers can understand needs better” (LA: Placement Finder)

- 3.4 The facility to identify the preferred location for the placement also does not meet the needs of some placement finders. Whilst there are three options (to define location by LA, town/village or distance ‘as the crow flies’ from a postcode), they cannot be used in conjunction and do not always meet needs. Our early consultations indicated some confusion about how to use this selection facility and the case studies identified some specific concerns. For example, one placement finder would like to input a town or village and search in the town and surrounding area; another commented that ‘as the crow flies’ is not a very helpful measure – *“it would make more sense to be distance by road”*.

Scope:

- 3.5 The current narrow scope of CCSR limits its potential to support placement finding and commissioning practices. In particular:

the CCSR is not intuitive in that it does not enable a search for vacancies that are due to come up in the future: *“It would be really useful if providers could indicate future vacancies that they know are going to come up for example in 2 weeks time – dealing with planned forthcoming vacancies is a key challenge”*¹²(LA: Placement Finder);

¹¹ We understand this is the method recommended by the CCSR central team and SEWIC

¹² We understand that it is possible for providers to input future vacancies onto the CCSR system. The issue appears therefore to be one of awareness and how the system is used rather than functionality.

-
- the CCSR does not record comprehensive information about placement needs, throughput and outcomes - information which is essential for identifying needs and working with providers to fill gaps.

“We need qualitative information to help with planning but the CCSR can’t give any indication of outcomes as there is no tracking facility or option to provide qualitative information” (LA: Commissioner)

“Currently I access information from internal LA systems about all new placement requests and changes of placement – who came in, what age range, reason for placement, placement types made, and emergency change of placements. This is the information I need and it’s not provided by CCSR. The internal data also shows the kind of placements we’re looking for and where they are struggling to meet need (e.g. teen foster placements are a significant shortage). We use that information to identify what we need, feedback to providers what we want and look to them to help us fill the gap. Providers are responding to these issues in their business plans/plans for expansion e.g. young children residential to family placements” (LA: Commissioner)

“That the CCSR only includes information on new and not existing placements is a major limitation and a driver to continue using phone/emails/spreadsheets” (LA: Placement Finder)

“Also it doesn’t indicate when a placement has ended – a placement broke down after 5 days and the child moved carers within the same agency – there was no re-tendering so there is no knowledge of that move on CCSR” (LA: Placement Finder)

“We get much more information about placements from our own performance management data – i.e. information on length of stay, support given and training received by the carers, age, gender, need and behaviours of the child. We need this to review placements and assess what went well or not so well. The CCSR does not provide enough qualitative information to do this and data at a national level does not help” (LA: Commissioner)

“We hope that the location indicator will make a big difference in terms of providing MI to see where the placements are” (LA: Commissioner)

“It would be helpful to get from CCSR strategic information such as who delivers, who doesn’t, what they promise versus what they deliver” (Head of Children’s Services)

Usability

Limited Clarity and Standardisation:

- 3.6 There is limited clarity and standardisation in the terminology and approaches to using CCSR, which undermines the value and reliability of searches and information. In particular, as highlighted previously, the tick-box selection criteria require the placement finders and providers to make independent judgements about the various terms, descriptions and ratings. There are no standard definitions to aid this process, which leads to inconsistent practice and use, and can undermine the value and reliability of information and value of the search function of the database.

"The terminology needs to be more uniform – e.g. the approval terms, durations etc" (LA: Placement Finder)

"There was no guidance on how to complete the tick-boxes – we are left to our own devices" (Provider)

"Short-term for some means one night or under a month, whilst for others it's less than two years" (Provider)

"Providers may tick every box to avoid doubt and maximise opportunities or may reflect carers preferences who change their mind" (LA: Placement Finder)

Time-Consuming Processes:

- 3.7 Whilst most providers felt that CCSR is user-friendly, some LA users commented that the system can be time consuming and not overly user-friendly, although some of these issues may be addressed with greater familiarity.

"There are a number of pages to go through when doing a search and the tick-boxes are clunky. Translating from the placement form into tick-boxes takes a long time" (LA: Placement Finder)

"I never know the correct way around to pick up previous match lists, so if I need to go back I have to start again" (LA: Placement Finder)

"If we do an initial search for internal vacancies and can't find a match we have to go back and start again to search for external vacancies" (LA: Placement Finder)

"We spent some time developing a process to pull off a list for the emergency weekend team. It was not possible to simply download the list, we had to copy and paste then manipulate it in Excel to put it into a usable version for the weekend team. Now we have the process it's not too bad, but it still involves messing around every Friday to get it right" (LA: Administrator)

Other Frustrations

- 3.8 The CCSR Central team have responded well to feedback about a number of issues (such as lengthy log-in processes and regular time-out). Nevertheless, despite these no longer being an issue, the initial problems still affect attitudes and use in the longer-term, with some users still identifying these as ‘frustrations’ when using the system.
- 3.9 It is also worth noting, however, that positive feedback was received from some providers that updating vacancies is a straightforward process and that the system is designed well and works “quite smoothly”.

Tendering Function

- 3.10 Feedback on the tendering function is also generally positive amongst LAs and providers that use it. There were some areas identified for potential improvement, including:
- the need to give a deadline within the email alert, making clear in particular whether an emergency placement is required;
 - provision for LAs to offer some feedback to providers on whether they are shortlisted or not;
 - opportunities for verbal contact to clarify and discuss issues with the LA placement finders:

“In one case this morning, our response was too late so it had to be sorted over the phone, which we would have done without CCSR anyway – in this case the child concerned had made allegations and the carer wanted to know more about it – after a phone call it was clear the allegations were a relatively minor issue but by the time this had been ascertained the opportunity on CCSR had closed” (Provider)

Leadership and Direction

- 3.11 It is apparent that implementation of the CCSR, certainly over the last few years, has lacked clear ownership, drive and direction. It has suffered from the common difficulties of a pan-Wales approach associated with the variability across LAs’ needs, attitudes and approaches. The dedicated team that set up and rolled out CCSR was disbanded a couple of years ago, which perhaps left some over-reliance on the CCSR Central team. Approaches to engaging and encouraging use have resulted in:
- an over-emphasis on technical solutions rather than a whole systems approach;
 - perceptions of a top-down approach with insufficient engagement of the end user – *“It’s difficult to keep the leadership going on CCSR. Staff turnover means that training has to be ongoing. If staff can’t see much benefit it’s hard to keep them motivated”* (Head of Children’s Services);
 - ‘three-line whip’ approaches leading to misuse and inefficiency - senior managers saying *“you must use CCSR”* and placement finders *“doing a search on CCSR after we’ve found the placement to demonstrate we’ve used it”*.

Engagement and Awareness Raising

- 3.12 Through the telephone consultations and case studies, we received positive feedback about the training and the technical team being positive and responsive to feedback.

"The CCSR team respond to feedback well – they have reduced the complexity required for passwords, have allowed us to go back pages and print pages" (LA: Placement Finder)

"They are very supportive and patient" (LA: Commissioner)

"The CCSR team have been helpful and reacted well to user comments on limitations with CCSR and have been able to rectify many of them (e.g. problems with passwords are now easier to provide)" (LA: Placement Provider)

- 3.13 However, as highlighted earlier, despite the CCSR Central Team responding well to feedback and addressing the issues, the initial problems have affected attitudes and use in the longer term. It also appears that support has been focused on mostly technical aspects and has not successfully engaged with the end user – there is a gap in general guidance, information and training that would clearly:

- set out what the CCSR does, what to use it for and how to make best use of it to support the placement finding process;

"Previous searches cannot be deleted quickly. I think I'm OK with the database so if it is easy to clear them I'd like to be shown how!" (LA: Placement Finder)

"We don't know what the LA sees and so don't know how to sell and market ourselves. Provider MI would help with learning and planning" (Provider)

"I've never been shown how to access any MI" (LA: Commissioner)

"I've never actually been shown how to run off reports so I don't know how to do it" (LA: Commissioner)

"We don't understand CCSR and what it can do – we only use it because some Welsh Councils do" (Provider)

"Providers talked about being able to earmark vacancies, but the LA did not recognise or know about this" (Research Comment)

-
- identify what MI is available, how to access it and how it might inform commissioning practice;

“One provider would like to use MI but doesn’t know how; another was unaware of the MI function at all” (Researcher Comment)

“We get regular emails about training, rather than how to use MI” (LA: Commissioner)

“I’ve never been trained on the MI functions – I don’t know how accessible it is. I would want it to be a click of the button” (LA: Commissioner)

“I would like to use CCSR MI for the LA’s Corporate Parenting and Recruitment and Retention Strategies” (Head of Children’s Services)

- understand end user needs, interprets concerns and facilitates improved use.

“We have had training and attended meetings and the technical team respond well to address technical things, but they have not tackled the essence of the problem - if it’s not being used it won’t work – a chicken and egg issue” (LA: Commissioner)

“Training/workshops have been something we are ‘talked at’ and we’re not given the opportunity to discuss the issues/concerns.” (LA: Placement Finder)

3.14 Some communication responses to issues raised have exaggerated problems and inconsistencies further – for example, directives from senior managers that *“we must use CCSR”*, or more recent rhetoric encouraging use of CCSR, because it produces good MI rather than supporting the placement finding process.

“We use CCSR after finding a placement to show we’ve used it” (LA: Placement Finder)

“We are using it because we’re told to – it’s a glorified provider list not impacting on stability or contributed greatly to matching” (LA: Commissioner)

“Sometimes when we have to find a placement quickly, we find one and then go back to input data into CCSR to evidence that we have used it” (LA: Placement Finder)

“We are told by the LA to use it – it’s just another complication to the day” (LA: Placement Finder)

“We update internal vacancies – social workers send me an email and I update this on CCSR. This duplicates processes as we have an internal list” (LA: Administrator)

Realistic Expectations

3.15 There are some **questions about the realism of expecting the CCSR to have a tangible impact on placement stability**, given that it is just one tool within a complex set of factors and approaches that influence being able to find the best placement in all cases. To achieve this goal also requires:

- resources within LAs to enable good practice placement planning;
- the good/'right' provision to be available;
- effective use of the tool by placement finders;
- strategic commissioning approaches developed within and across LAs.

"We have identified new providers leading to better value for money but this has been driven, or could be attributed to the functions of SEWIC, rather than CCSR itself – for example, joint working between LAs, verification, managing the market strategically" (LA: Commissioner)

"The impact on the market and managing the market is fairly limited and I'm unsure whether it could have achieved this" (LA: Commissioner)

"CCSR costs us a lot and it's a database...SEWIC is now doing what CCSR was meant to do...if CCSR was that good then SEWIC would not be necessary" (Head of Children's Service)

"We are structured in the way we deal with placements and have minimised the risk of LAs playing off costs against one another – though this is probably down to joint-working through SEWIC rather than CCSR per se" (LA: Commissioner)

"Our initial expectations were that it would help with commission decisions but this hasn't happened as there is not qualitative/tracking information" (Head of Children's Services)

Nb: CCSR and SEWIC worked in partnership so in reality there would be difficulty in unpicking the separate impact of either as both played a role

Historical and Political Factors

3.16 Stakeholders at the validation event for the research suggested that the final report should also reflect a range of historical and political issues that have influenced roll-out and implementation of CCSR across Wales, including:

- the dedicated team that initially set up and rolled out CCSR was disbanded a couple of years ago and with it went much of the leadership, drive and direction. This has left a gap between policy and implementation;
- considerable effort was put into engaging individuals and developing understanding at the outset – this has been lost with changes in staff (over the years there have been several changes in Directors and Heads of Children's Services personnel, as well as social workers and placement finders);

-
- there have been some cultural/acceptance issues around a 'computer solution' and misunderstanding around the tool being a 'complete solution' – i.e. it was never intended to be a complete solution, but was intended to be a helpful, time-saving and efficient tool to support LA processes;
 - a common barrier for the roll-out of pan-Wales directives is a difficulty in encouraging all LAs to work or respond in similar and consistent ways (*“there are other examples where we have developed consistent frameworks or guidance, and then it’s not taken forward as not all 22 LAs agree to participate”*);
 - resistance amongst LAs to share placements with other LAs.

4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is clear that the CCSR has not fully realised its initial goals and there are a range of factors preventing it from doing so. Nevertheless, there are positive attitudes amongst national, LA and provider stakeholders about the potential value of CCSR - ***“there is a place for CCSR....but not in its current form”***. There is a clear need to improve effectiveness and use.
- 4.2 The interlinked nature of the issues influencing its success means that it is difficult at this stage to set a specific path towards improved effectiveness. It is clear however, that the **first and major step required is to develop much clearer ownership, leadership and direction.**

Recommendations:

- 1) The CCSR could offer greater value to LAC placement planning and commissioning if clearer collective ownership and direction was provided across the 22 LAs. LAs should therefore identify (within the current developing structures for regional planning and commissioning) a resource(s) and/or facilitator(s) to more effectively lead and direct a whole-system based approach to improvement and implementation of the CCSR going forward.
- 2) Caution should be taken when considering the application of a CCSR-type approach to other contexts, such as for adults and specialist provision. Whilst there are positive attitudes towards the concept of a database of this nature supporting effective placement finding, there are significant lessons to be learnt from the implementation of CCSR.

Themes to address to develop a more effective tool:

- 1) Identify and communicate ***a clear and re-focused goal***, which is shared across all LAs and users. At the validation event for this research stakeholders agreed that it should be: ***“a tool to help find the best placement for all children in all cases”***. Questions to address include:
 - should it be used for both internal and external placement searches, or could it be just providing access to the national market for specialist provision?
 - should it be useful for emergency placements?
 - should it provide more information to inform commissioning - placement needs, throughput and outcomes?
 - 2) With the re-focused goal in mind, ***address significant functionality and usability issues***, which might include, for example:
 - amending the selection criteria approach;
 - developing a more intuitive system – looking for vacancies in the future;
 - developing functionality to capture placement information – where made, outcomes, placement changes etc;
 - developing all Wales use of the tendering function;
 - aligning with other systems/approaches (e.g. in-house social care systems).
 - 3) Develop an ***effective change management approach***, for example:
 - redesigning the database to address the issues for Theme 2) should involve the ‘end user’ to establish ‘what will be helpful for you?’;
-

-
- addressing the variability in practices and increasing use of the CCSR across LAs and providers will involve:
 - changing attitudes and re-engagement at several levels across LAs and providers;
 - developing standard definitions, terminology and consistent practices;
 - offering clearer and more relevant guidance, support and training, focused on the needs of placement finders, commissioners and providers;
 - we understand that the CCSR functionality is currently being developed to support the introduction of the pan-Wales Framework Agreement – there needs to be explicit and relevant guidance for LA commissioners and placement finders about how the existence of the Framework Agreement will affect use and searches on CCSR.