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Bridgend County Borough Council



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Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 15 April 2021

Dear Councillor,

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

A meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 21 April 2021 at 09:30.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008 (including whipping declarations)
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 8
To receive for approval the minutes of a meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 of the 14/12/20
4. Safeguarding Children & Adults during Covid 19 9 - 28

Invitees:

Claire Marchant - Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing
Councillor Nicole Burnett - Cabinet Member for Social Services & Early Help
Jackie Davies - Head of Adult Social Care
Laura Kinsey - Head of Children's Social Care
Nicola Echanis - Head of Education and Family Support
Liz Walton James - Group Manager IAA & Safeguarding
Mark Lewis - Group Manager - Family Support
Terri Warrilow - Safeguarding & Secure Estates Manager

Claire O'Keefe - Deputy Head of Safeguarding - Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
Superintendent Karen Thomas - Communities and Partnerships - South Wales Police
Detective Inspector Ben Rowe - Strategic Safeguarding Inspector - South Wales Police

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5. Urgent Items

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Please note: Due to the current requirement for social distancing this meeting will not be held at its usual location. This will be a virtual meeting and Members and Officers will be attending remotely. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643147 / 643148.

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal, HR & Regulatory Services

Councillors:

S Aspey
MC Clarke
PA Davies
SK Dendy
J Gebbie
CA Green

Councillors

A Hussain
M Jones
MJ Kearn
JE Lewis
AA Pucella
G Thomas

Councillors

T Thomas
CA Webster
DBF White
PJ White

Agenda Item 3

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 HELD IN REMOTELY VIA SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ON MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2020 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor CA Green – Chairperson

MC Clarke	PA Davies	SK Dendy	J Gebbie
A Hussain	M Jones	MJ Kearn	AA Pucella
G Thomas	CA Webster	DBF White	

Apologies for Absence

T Thomas, PJ White, J Davies, P Tyson

Officers:

Rachel Pick	Scrutiny Officer
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Manager
Tracy Watson	Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

Cllr Nicole Burnett	Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help
Cllr Dhanisha Patel	Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Laura Kinsey	Head of Childrens Social Care
Andrew Thomas	Group Manager Sports & Physical Activity

126. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D White declared a personal interest in agenda Item 4 because his wife was a Business Support Officer in the Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate. He also declared a personal interest, as he was a shielder.

Councillor C Webster declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, as her son had just been accepted into Social Services as a part of the transition service, Disabled Children's Team.

127. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 dated 11 November 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

128. VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing, Head of Children's Social Care and Group Manager – Sports and Physical Activity presented on the impact of Covid-19 on the Directorate and the response.

Members asked the following:

A Member asked whether contact with Looked After Children (LAC) and their parents would be Covid-19 Tier-level appropriate, noting the possible change to Tier 4 soon by Welsh Government (WG). He also asked if risk assessments were a live document and whether checks were being undertaken with parents and foster carers to ensure children were safe and there were no symptoms of Covid-19.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that it had been a difficult decision to stop all face-to-face contact in favour of remote contact. Once face-to-face contact was permitted to resume, priority was given to groups such as new-born children and parents separated, children rehabilitated to their birthparents and siblings with close relationships. All contacts had been resumed. The Directorate followed WG guidance on the two-stage assessment whereby every situation was assessed to ascertain necessity and the degree of risk. It was the Directorate's policy that all children had contact in the first instance and, if deemed a necessity, the two-stage assessment was undertaken. Contact could occur outdoors but this was difficult during winter. Venues were now being used and, in partnership with Corporate Landlords, Health and Safety and Environmental Health, deep cleans after every contact session were being undertaken. Staff wore PPE and children and their families were supported to ensure all guidance was followed. Risk assessments were reviewed continually so that in the event of further restrictions/change in guidance, local arrangements were reviewed by practitioners and managers accordingly, e.g. an addendum was developed when Bridgend had its Covid-19 fire breaker restrictions imposed in October.

A Member asked whether there were any safety measures in place for the swapping of gifts between families and whether these would be subject to a 72-hour quarantine period.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that this posed a challenge and discussions were ongoing. It was understandable that parents would wish to provide gifts. If children moved to physical contact, these situations would need to be managed and risk assessed.

It was a Member's understanding that Bridgend was slower than other local authorities in rearranging contact for children and she asked what the reason was for this delay. Secondly, she asked if Bridgend would consider adding children with special needs to their priority groups for face-to-face contact because online contact was unsuitable for engagement. She asked how children were identified as a priority when those attending special schools did not have a Social Worker. Thirdly, the Member asked how many adult care homes had allowed indoor visits. The Member gave her compliments to the Commissioning Manager, who had received very good reports from managers of care homes in Bridgend on his hard work during Covid-19, and to the local authority for its swift payments process. Aside from the organisations that had provided wellbeing support, she also wished to mention individuals who had contributed to the wellbeing of others, with particular mention to the Bus Stop Library in Porthcawl.

The Head of Children's Social Care said she would take back the point about LAC/children with disabilities and communication needs being included as a priority group for face-to-face contact. The principle was that all LAC would have face-to-face contact. Secondly, it was difficult to comment on the situation with other local authorities. All Heads of Service had been in discussions throughout Covid-19 and WG was in regular contact with regional Heads of Service groups. It had not been flagged by WG that Bridgend were experiencing delays compared with other local authorities. Some families had raised their concerns and frustrations in not having contact resumed, and these issues were addressed. Thirdly, the Head of Children's Social Care explained that a transitional model with one site manager was underway. If children were receiving

support from the Disabilities Team, an assessment was undertaken and, if support was required into adulthood, further assessment would be undertaken. She would be happy to pass on any queries concerning individual cases to the appropriate manager. The Member confirmed her query was not regarding individual cases and welcomed the opportunity to speak with the Head of Children's Social Care following the meeting.

In relation to adult care home visits, the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing explained that risk assessments were undertaken at a regional level and considered by the Management Team. Care homes needed to undertake their own risk assessments. One challenge was if staff/residents tested positive, the standard procedure was for the care home to go into lockdown for two incubations of the virus (28 days). This was currently being reviewed by WG. It was Public Health Wales' policy that face-to-face visits could not be facilitated if a care home went into lockdown due to Covid-19. As at 9 December, nine homes were in that situation, with one potentially (awaiting confirmation), and one taking the decision not to facilitate visits. Six homes were facilitating visits, while two were part of a pilot for rapid testing. This was a moving position because any care home had the potential to move from asymptomatic to positive Covid-19 cases.

The Member further noted the new and various facilities for contact that had been reported in the news and whether Bridgend would be facilitating, for example, marquees as some reassurance to families.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing noted that situations where families were unable to see each other had been the most challenging and difficult. There had been innovations through digital platforms but this had not been as optimal as face-to-face contact. WG were investing in a pod in one care home. Some care homes were better able to facilitate face-to-face contact than others. This was why risk assessments were so important. Through the Commissioning Team, the Directorate continued to work in partnership to promote good and safe practice.

The Member noted the disadvantage to those people who did not use IT. She had received one piece of information through her door and asked if any further paper information would be distributed.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing explained that digital sessions with carers had been conducted and that some were more comfortable with IT than others. She stated that the distribution of information needed to be looked at again, perhaps complementing with newsletters and correspondence.

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help agreed that the local authority needed to reach out to those who were not as well connected digitally. Evergreen Hall was working with physical magazines and with RSLs and Social Services to try and distribute information and advice on wellbeing. She asked Members to consider any individuals they knew who required information in paper form.

Another Member suggested that it was worth contacting the Carers' Centre to identify individuals requiring paper information.

A Member asked that, as a corporate parent, was it possible to listen to our children, and was the local authority able to ensure that all children and young adults were placed safely and in Bridgend.

The Head of Children's Social Care assured the Committee that the Directorate was committed to listening to children and young adults and ensuring their safety. They had endeavoured to do this throughout the pandemic by staying in touch remotely and face-

to-face as much as possible. There had been positive feedback received from LAC and care leavers on the new ways of working through modern technology, and these methods would continue. In terms of children's safety, Social Workers were particularly concerned about not seeing children face-to-face and worked closely with partners to obtain feedback on their observations. Children on the Child Protection Register attended the hub provision, particularly the most vulnerable and LAC. Bridgend's performance for the number of LAC being placed within the borough was positive compared with other local authorities. The majority of LAC were placed within Bridgend and prioritised to stay in the borough, with plans in place for additional carers to support this. In cases where LAC were placed outside of Bridgend, this was due to living with relatives.

The Member asked how the Directorate stayed in touch with LAC who were living outside of the borough.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that the Directorate stayed in touch with LAC living outside of the borough via remote contact and, within Covid-19 guidance, statutory visits.

A Member asked about the change in operating models for Day Services and the impact this would have on carers for whom this provision was their only respite.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing noted that Day Services was a challenging area but the Directorate had tried to mitigate the risk by continuing to operate services. It had looked at the maximum number of people it could support in safe, socially distanced ways. This meant fewer numbers each day and fewer days available. The Directorate also looked at other support available, e.g. outreach support with carers. The day provision in Bridgend continued to operate compared with some areas.

The Member was glad to hear the continuation of service provision as she was aware of how vital the day services were.

A Member asked that the Committee note the following. One issue that had emerged among residents during the pandemic was the confusing and difficult language to explain how people could access PAs and the support provision for their own family's wellbeing, especially for those with language difficulties. Should Bridgend enter a different Covid-19 Tier in the future, the Member asked if easier language could be used to explain the rules more clearly and could they be sent out to people so they knew whether they had their PA to help them.

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help noted that this was her first Scrutiny Committee as Cabinet Member. She wished to thank the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing, Group Manager – Sports and Physical Activity, Head of Children's Social Care, Head of Adult Social Care and their respective teams for their commitment and dedication. She could not stress enough how focused the Directorate was during extremely challenging and stressful times. She wished to assure Members that she had the same concerns and asked questions regularly to ensure residents were considered and staff were supported.

The Committee thanked the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing and her team for their work during Covid-19.

129. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2020

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report. She advised that Members would recall that the Council had been advised that the Local Government Financial Settlement from Welsh Government would be later than expected, and therefore the scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy would be considered by Scrutiny Committees after Cabinet considered the draft proposals on 19 January, instead of the December cycle of meetings, as originally planned.

As set out in the table in paragraph 4.1 of the report, and following approval at November Council the dates for Scrutiny meetings had been moved to:

20 Jan at 10am – Draft MTFS for Education & Family Support and Communities Directorate.

21st Jan at 10am – Draft MTFS for Social Services and Wellbeing and the Chief Executives Directorate.

In paragraph 4.5 the Committee was reminded of the Criteria form which Members could use to propose further items for the FWP which the Committee could then consider for prioritisation at a future meeting. The Criteria Form emphasised the need to consider issues such as impact, risk, performance, budget and community perception when identifying topics for investigation and to ensure a strategic responsibility for Scrutiny and maximizes the opportunity for impact.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal calendar of meetings using the agreed form, and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the next item for the Committee's Forward Work Programme set out in paragraphs 4.1 of the report.

130. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 11:00

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

21 APRIL 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS DURING COVID-19

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the safeguarding arrangements for adults and children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

March – September 2020

- 3.1 On 26th November 2020 Corporate Parenting Committee received a report entitled 'Support For Vulnerable Children During Covid-19'. The report noted that in late February/early March 2020, as part of the preparation for supporting children and young people in the global pandemic, business continuity plans were reviewed. The report noted it was essential to ensure Bridgend partners continued to safeguard children and support their wellbeing in a time of great challenge. It was reported that the workforce was enabled to work from home through the greater use of technology with a focus on dynamic assessment of risk in which the risks to the workforce and risks to children and young people needed to be understood, balanced and mitigated. Face to face home visits only took place when the risks of not doing so were greater than the risks to the workforce of potential exposure to the virus.
- 3.2 In line with Welsh Government guidance social services re-designed the way services were delivered and prioritised. A service plan was put in place in March 2020 and

this has been subject to regular review as restrictions have been varied and/or national guidance has been revised.

3.3 The table below provides data on Children's Social Care activity during the period April 2020 to September 2020:-

	Assessments	S47 Enquiries	Statutory Visits (Children Looked After)	Statutory Visits (Child Protection)	Child Protection Conferences	Core Group Meetings
Apr-20	98	32	225	324	50	120
May-20	57	48	224	442	59	142
Jun-20	65	49	230	369	57	135
Jul-20	104	40	255	392	67	136
Aug-20	76	40	240	526	43	169
Sep-20	80	55	260	426	52	132
Total	480	264	1434	2479	328	834

- 96.67% of new assessments for children were completed within statutory timescales
- 89% of visits to children looked after were completed within statutory timescales
- 92% of visits to children placed on the child protection register were completed within approved timescales
- 93% of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within statutory timescales

3.4 The table below identifies the mode of contact made for statutory functions between 1 April 2020 and 30 September 2020:-

	Statutory Visits (Children Looked After)	Statutory Visits (Child Protection)
Face to Face	37%	74%
Telephone	48%	20%
Video calls	15%	6%

3.5 The table below provides data on Adult Safeguarding activity during the period April 2020 to September 2020:-

	Number of Safeguarding Referrals	Met threshold for Adult Protection Procedures
Mar-20	21	4
Apr-20	14	2
May-20	28	7
Jun-20	41	10
Jul-20	32	3
Aug-20	21	4
Sep-20	20	1

3.6 From the outset of the pandemic the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has remained fully operational at Ravens Court but with a reduced number of staff working from the office base on a daily basis. A small central team had been based at Ravens Court to receive calls and enquiries from professionals and members of the public on open cases. These would then have been passed to relevant personnel (based at home) if further action /advice is required.

3.7 The following support had been established for vulnerable learners via Education and Family Support Teams and Children’s Social Care:

- A multi-agency approach to supporting vulnerable children and prioritising the most vulnerable to offer some of them access to emergency childcare hubs (pre-school and school) and special schools was established in April 2020 in response to the pandemic. This approach was agreed between the Education and Family Support Directorate and Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and was effective from 20 April 2020 until the end of July 2020.
- In the first 2 weeks of September there was a gradual return into education, with all pupils officially back in school from 14 September until all schools closed again on 11 December. The schools remained closed, other than for foundation phase pupils who returned to school on 22 February. Key Stage 2 and secondary pupils started returning to schools on 15 March 2021 with the expectation that schools will be opened fully on 12 April.
- Virtual/blended learning was offered as well as on-site provision for vulnerable learners during all school closure periods.
- During the current COVID-19 crisis, vulnerable learners were also provided with a variety of contact and support from a range of services to ensure their needs continue to be met. Those children who were on the child protection register and are also eligible for free school meals were having

their meals delivered to them directly by staff from the Edge of Care Team and the Bridgend Youth Justice Service. Information gathered on those visits was shared with allocated social workers and schools.

- A Central Hub and an Early Help COVID Helpline based in Ravens Court was established which assisted in the join up of support for children and families. This multi-agency hub supported the identification of services involved with children and families and signposting families and professionals to those allocated workers in the first instance. Where children and families are not known to services, the hub assisted in providing information, advice and assistance to ensure those needs are met and prevent issues escalating. This hub also acted as the conduit for referrals from schools and social workers of vulnerable learners who benefited from a place at one of the emergency childcare hubs.

- 3.8 In addition to the statutory services/functions covered in the service plan, the Council also responded to the need to provide support to its most vulnerable children and young people during the school holidays and established bespoke provision to achieve this at the time.
- 3.9 The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate was able to make good use of Welsh Government funding to provide activities and support during the summer period. 20 days of activities were provided supporting 39 young people, who were registered or classed as vulnerable, and with 259 sessions provided to young people over the four week period.
- 3.10 Additionally a programme was supported for young people with additional needs who would normally have accessed the Discovery Days respite programme during the summer period. Last year the programme supported households including siblings with 21 young people being supported.
- 3.11 There had also been a growth in digital work with young people with disabilities with weekly on line activities progressed.

4. Current situation/proposal

September 2020 – January 2021

- 4.1 Over the pandemic period of the past year, children's social care has developed and adapted a number of service plans to support the working arrangements for staff whilst ensuring the most vulnerable children and young people continue to be contacted and visited on a face to face basis. The service plans have responded to the differing Tiers of Welsh Government guidance including the "Circuit Breaker Lockdown" or "Firebreak" which came into force between 23 October 2020 until 9 November 2020. The service plan for tier four restrictions can be found in **Appendix 1**
- 4.2 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has remained fully operational at Ravens Court with a reduced number of staff working from the office base on a daily basis. A comprehensive MASH risk assessment has been completed to ensure the working arrangements for the Information, Advice and Assistance Team, The Adult

Safeguarding Team and all of its partner agencies withing MASH work in an environment which is safe and compliant with Welsh Government Guidance. At the start of the pandemic, a small central safeguarding children’s social care team was also working from Ravens Court offices to receive calls and enquiries from professionals and members of the public on open cases. As the options in the use of technology has progressed the work of the central team has now returned to the individual teams by means of virtual engagement.

4.3 The table below provides data on Children’s Social Care activity during the period April 2020 to December 2020:-

	Assessments	S47 Enquiries	Statutory Visits (Children Looked After)	Statutory Visits (Child Protection)	Child Protection Conferences	Core Group Meetings
Apr-20	98	33	225	324	34	124
May-20	57	48	224	442	63	148
Jun-20	65	49	230	369	57	139
Jul-20	104	41	255	394	73	138
Aug-20	76	40	238	540	39	183
Sep-20	80	55	263	412	57	140
Oct-20	93	46	221	394	82	132
Nov-20	82	62	266	496	83	149
Dec-20	129	49	274	399	36	132
Total	784	423	2196	3770	524	1285

- 95% of new assessments for children were completed within statutory timescales
- 85% of visits to children looked after were completed within statutory timescales
- 90% of visits to children placed on the child protection register were completed within approved timescales
- 95% of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within statutory timescales on a virtual basis. Plans are underway to gradually introduce a blend of virtual and face to face conferences with family and partner professionals but this will be dependent on Welsh Government guidance.

4.4 The table below identified the mode of contact made for statutory functions between 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020:-

	Statutory Visits (Children Looked After)	Statutory Visits (Child Protection)
Face to Face	44%	76%
Telephone	42%	17%
Video calls	14%	7%

4.5 Multi Agency Safeguarding

Despite the extreme challenges over the past year, multi-agency information sharing and safeguarding practices have continued to ensure adults, children and young people are safe within the community.

An example of this is the convening of multi-agency Professional Strategy meetings. These meetings respond to safeguarding concerns about those whose work, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, which brings them into contact with children or adults at risk. It also includes individuals who have caring responsibilities for children or adults in need of care and support and their employment or voluntary work brings them into contact with children or adults at risk.

A total of 58 Professional Abuse Strategy Meetings have been convened between 01/04/2020 to 31/01/2021 in respect of professionals working within services to children and young people. A total of 75 meetings have been convened in relation to professionals working within services to adults.

The service continue to work closely on a virtual basis at other multi-agency forums such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). This forum assess and manages the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders.

In addition, the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board has continued and the subgroups regularly meet to prioritise its safeguarding responsibilities.

Daily discussions are a core function within the MASH where high risk domestic abuse cases are considered. Multi-agency working and information sharing is essential to facilitate this function which has continued virtually throughout the pandemic.

Between July 2020 to September 2020, 42 high risk domestic abuse cases were discussed in this forum and between October 2020 to December 2020, 61 cases were discussed. This function of MASH allows information to be shared at the earliest opportunity, reducing risk and targeting support and protection for adults and children without the delay of waiting for a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which is convened every two weeks.

Although restrictions on people’s movements, social events and the closing of pubs and restaurants saw a reduction in Public Protection Notices (PPNs) generally throughout the pandemic, the domestic abuse related PPNs remained at a similar level throughout these months.

4.6 Adult Safeguarding

In early March 2020, as part of the preparation for supporting adults in the global pandemic, all directorate business continuity plans were reviewed in the same way as Children’s Social Care. It was essential to ensure that Bridgend Adult Social Care Services continued to safeguard adults and support their wellbeing in a time of great challenge. As far as possible the workforce was enabled to work from home and there has been a greater use of technology aided by risk assessments to ensure practitioners and vulnerable adults are protected. Face to face home visits only took place when the risks of not doing so were greater than the risks to the workforce of potential exposure to the virus.

The Table below shows comparative figures for Adults at Risk referrals received between April 2020 to December 2020 and the number that progressed to a Strategy Meeting.

Years 1 April – 31 December	Number of Safeguarding Referrals	Met threshold for Adult Protection Procedures
Apr-20	14	2
May-20	28	6
Jun-20	41	10
Jul-20	32	4
Aug-20	21	5
Sep-20	20	1
Oct-20	31	12
Nov-20	43	6
Dec-20	30	4
Total	260	50

The table below shows a breakdown in the categories of abuse for April 2020 until December 2020. Please note as a person can have more than one category of abuse:-

Category of Abuse	Total
Emotional or Psychological	49
Financial	22
Neglect	120
Physical	98
Sexual	16
Total	305

For all safeguarding referrals received that do not meet the threshold for adult protection procedures an enquiry report is completed and recommendations made e.g. no further action the adult is not at risk or they may have needs for care and support and a referral made for social work support. It may also be appropriate for people to be signposted to alternative services. An enquiry report is also sent to the referrer where appropriate.

4.7 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a statutory framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of individuals who lack mental capacity to do so for themselves. In 2007, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) were introduced to provide a legal framework to prevent breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights following the 'Bournewood' judgement.

DoLS is appropriate if people lack the capacity to consent to a particular treatment or care that is recognised by others as being in their best interest or which will protect them from harm. Welsh Government issued guidance which confirmed that during the pandemic, the principles of the MCA and the safeguards provided by DoLS still apply.

Bridgend as the Supervisory Body needed to take a proportionate approach to all applications, including those made before and during the pandemic. Any decisions must be taken specifically for each person.

Due to Welsh Government restrictions, for much of 2020/21, it has not been possible for Best Interest Assessors to undertake face to face visits in care homes. During periods of lockdown decisions around professional visiting are risk based decisions. Therefore to undertake DoLS assessments and reviews, remote techniques have been used, such as telephone or video calls where appropriate to do so, and the person's communication needs have been taken into consideration. Views have also be sought from family, friends and professionals who are concerned for the person's welfare.

It has been a challenging time for Best Interest Assessors and each DoLS assessment has taken a longer period of time to complete. Therefore currently BCBC have a backlog of 152 DoLS assessments that need to be completed. A plan is in place to clear the backlog. Arrangements for lateral flow device (LFD) testing will be in place in all care homes so BIA can undertake these tests when appropriate.

The team is currently working on allocating on a care home basis to limit the footfall into each home so numbers allocated to each BIA will depend on the requirements per home and how many new referrals are received.

The service is working towards clearing the backlog by the end of the financial year. Although it should be noted that approximately 60 - 70 new referrals were received between mid-February and 31st March 2021.

In addition to funding received from Welsh Government of £11,803 for this financial year; 2021/22, following a successful further bid, BCBC were granted additional funding of £51,000, which became available in March 2021. Some of this funding will be used for training. The remainder of the funding will purchase additional Best Interest Assessors (BIA) capacity to reduce the current backlog.

DoLS Referrals including outcome status

Years	Number of DoLS referrals received	Status at 31/12/20
1 April – 31 December		
Granted Standard Authorisation	370	129
Criteria not met		0
Withdrawn		77
Allocated/Ongoing		48
Awaiting Allocation		116

4.8 Secure Estate – Parc Prison

In April 2016, in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, BCBC became responsible for assessing and meeting the care and support needs of adults in the secure estate (Parc Prison) in Wales.

A small team comprising of two social workers and an occupational therapist was developed. This team is usually based in Parc Prison however due to the global pandemic the Ministry of Justice made the decision to lock prison's down due to the risks of Covid 19 in the secure estate environment. The Safeguarding Prison Social Work team have remained fully operational but working from home, using remote techniques, such as telephone or video calls where appropriate to do so.

The social work team, also works as part of a wider multi-disciplinary prison team. The team assesses the needs of prisoners with care and support needs, with families of prisoners, plan for prisoner release and liaise with other local authorities to ensure

a safe discharge. If a prisoner requires a care package of support this is commissioned from G4S who provide domiciliary care service.

Prior to Covid-19 the service had seen a year on year increase in the numbers of referrals received. However from the figures below the referral rate has dropped this year:-

Years	Number of Secure Estate Referrals	Number of Assessments Completed for the Secure Estate
1 April – 31 December		
Apr-20	1	2
May-20	8	4
Jun-20	6	7
Jul-20	4	2
Aug-20	7	4
Sep-20	11	3
Oct-20	6	3
Nov-20	14	7
Dec-20	3	10
Total	60	42

The impact of Covid 19 in the prison environment was significant, in order to try and contain the spread of Covid 19 prisoners were spending long periods of time in their cells, exercise was limited to 1 hour per day. Social care staff were based in specific areas of the prison and only worked in that area to prevent cross contamination. During the first wave of Covid infection in March 2020 – May 2020 7 prisoners contracted Covid 19, however the outbreak of Covid was far worse in the second wave when over 150 prisoners and over 100 prison officers contracted Covid 19 and there were three prisoner deaths.

4.9 Residential & Nursing Homes

Adult Safeguarding and Contract Monitoring Teams work very closely together to support independent residential providers. Contract monitoring officers telephoned care homes on a weekly basis to offer support and to monitor the number of Covid cases in each home (residents and staff), this would form the basis of a RAG status report to the Head of Adult Social Care and the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing. Over the New Year period three homes were managed via the Escalating Concerns Process following significant Covid outbreak with the majority of staff and residents testing positive. JIMP (Joint Interagency Monitoring Panel) meetings were convened initially on a daily and then weekly basis. This is a statutory process led by the Authority. The purpose of the multi-agency process is to ensure the residents receive the necessary care to safeguard their health and wellbeing. The group will support the Responsible Individual (RI) in their legal role. All three homes are now Covid free.

There was a significant impact on the care home population with a high number of deaths amongst residents who had been diagnosed with Covid-19. This impacted on the wellbeing of other residents and the staff. Through the JIMP process the

service worked with care homes providers and offered additional counselling services to residents, staff and the managers of the homes. The impact on the care home population in Bridgend was reported to Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board by the Director and Head of Service in a Board meeting.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality impacts arising from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within the County Borough of Bridgend. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the wellbeing goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

7.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report.

- Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the SSWBA focusses on sustainable prevention and wellbeing outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, because of rising demographics and increasing complexity, the remodelling and transformation of services continues to be a priority.
- Prevention – the report is about the approaches adopted by the Directorate in line with the SSWBA, for example, the continued provision of information, advice and assistance to enable people to remain independent and safe.
- Integration – the implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, particularly the NHS and the Police, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. The report evidences work with statutory partners and the Third Sector.
- Collaboration – The collaborative approaches described in the report, are managed and monitored through various strategic and collaborative boards across Directorates and with partners.
- Involvement – the key stakeholders are the people who use social care. There is considerable engagement including surveys, stakeholder meetings, feedback forms and the complaints process. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Where applicable the Council has claimed support from the Welsh Government COVID Hardship fund to support the provision of services for the county borough's most vulnerable children, young people and adults and this will continue into 2021-22. Any additional pressures not met from Welsh Government funding will be highlighted in the quarterly revenue budget monitoring reports to Cabinet.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the content of the report.

Claire Marchant
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March 2021

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Background documents:

None

Service Plan for Alert Level 4 Restrictions

Level 4 / Very High Risk: Restrictions at this level would be equivalent to the ‘firebreak’ regulations or lockdown. These could either be deployed as a ‘firebreak’ by doing so in advance, or as an emergency ‘lockdown’ measure if advance notice is not possible.

When further operational guidance is provided by Welsh Government the senior management team will review and update the Service Plan as required.

All staff are to use effective infection prevention & control measures including social distancing, hand hygiene, correct and appropriate use of PPE.

Child Protection Visits

Visits to children who are on the Child Protection Register should be carried out at least every 10 working days and it is expected that these will ordinarily be undertaken face to face. If following a two stage risk assessment a decision is taken that this requirement should be met through other remote/virtual contact then this decision must be agreed by a member of the senior management team and the rationale for it must be recorded.

Core Groups

Core groups should take place using virtual means such as Skype or Teams wherever possible. If a parent or professional does not have this technology they should be encouraged to use the phone the SW who can speak them on speakerphone to enable them to engage within the meeting.



Visits to Children Looked After

Statutory Visits to children who are looked after should take place virtually during Alert Level 4. If a face to face visit is deemed to be necessary then the two stage risk assessment should be completed and agreement given by a member of the senior management team before it takes place.

Visits to Children who are the subject of a Care and Support Plan

Visits to children who are the subject of a Care and Support Plan should take place virtually during Alert Level 4. If a face to face visit is deemed to be necessary then the two stage risk assessment should be completed and agreement given by a member of the senior management team before it takes place.

Care and Support Meetings

Care and Support meetings should take place using virtual means such as Skype or MS Teams wherever possible. If a parent or professional does not have this technology they should be encouraged to use the phone the SW who can speak them on speakerphone to enable them to engage within the meeting.

Face to Face Contact

Where there were prior arrangements in place for children who are looked after to have contact with their family, the contact can continue. Arrangements will need to be established wherever possible for contact to take place using remote facilities such as face-time, telephone calls etc. and for carers to supervise as appropriate. In instances where contact is considered to be necessary the two part necessity/risk assessment will need to be completed and agreement be given by a member of the senior management team, prior to the contact going ahead. Key priority groups for direct contact that may be assessed as necessary include:

- Infants in care proceedings
- Children with communication difficulties
- Children whose care plan is reunification
- 'Goodbye contacts'
- Contacts for the purpose of Social Work assessment

Respite/Short Breaks

While there is ongoing community transmission of the virus it is important to avoid contact with others as far as possible which includes visits or overnight stays in other households. This would mean that respite care is best avoided other than in exceptional circumstances. Where respite care is judged to be in the best interests of the child, the guidance in the document 'PHW Advisory Note - Use of PPE in Social Care Settings' should be applied. Where a short break is to be provided the two part Risk Assessment will need to be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

Access to Office Accommodation

At Alert Level 4 all staff are required to work from home wherever this is possible. Only staff working within MASH can attend the council offices at Ravens Court. Office accommodation will also be made available at CCYD to staff who in between visits (where it is not practicable for them to return home) need a space from which to work.

Initial Child Protection Conferences

At alert level 4, ICPC's will be held virtually using Microsoft Team (MS Teams) as the primary form of communication but the IRO will ensure family members are able to participate fully by another means if required.



Review Child Protection Conferences

At alert level 4, RCPC's will be held virtually using Microsoft Team (MS Teams) as the primary form of communication but the IRO will ensure family members are able to participate fully by another means if required.

The RCPC will be a multiagency meeting and as such decisions will be made in relation to Child Protection registration, children will be permitted to be de-registered providing the majority of professionals determine this is the appropriate course of action and the child is no longer considered to be at risk of significant harm.

Combined Looked After Children Reviews and CPC's

At alert level 4, these meetings will be held virtually using Microsoft Team (MS Teams) as the primary form of communication but the IRO will ensure family members are able to participate fully by another means if required.

Looked After Children Reviews

At alert level 4, these meetings will be held virtually using Microsoft Team (MS Teams) as the primary form of communication but the IRO will ensure family members are able to participate fully by another means if required.

Any actions/recommendations are recorded and forwarded to the Team Manager & case holding Social Worker as usual practice.

IRO Contact with children & young people

Contact between the IRO and children & young people who are looked after should now be undertaken virtually using Microsoft Team (MS Teams) prior to the LAC review.

Fostering

Undertaking Medical Assessments for Prospective Foster Carers

In line with most recent Welsh Government Guidance:

- prospective foster carers whose applications were already in the system as at 8th November 2020 and who have been unable to access face to face or virtual health assessments with a GP during the assessment process, can proceed to panel as planned with any recommendation for approval based on a self-declaration of health
- from 8th November 2020 all new prospective foster carer applicants entering the system, must access either a face to face or remote health assessment by a GP during the assessment process and before progressing to foster panel
- by 31st March 2021, all foster carers approved utilising a self-declaration of health form must have completed a full adult health assessment and the service must complete a review of their approval, under the regulatory first year review process

Face to face/in person contact during the foster care process

When considering in-person and face to face contact, The Fostering Service should continue to risk assess on a case by case basis. In instances where in-person/face to face contact is considered to be necessary the two part necessity/risk assessment will need to be completed and agreement be given by a member of the senior management team, prior to the contact going ahead. Such instances can include:

- assessment for connected persons and general foster carers (including home visits to applicants homes)

- face to face family contact
- preventative support services
- moving on to adoption
- placement support

Where face to face/in person contact is not deemed as necessary or appropriate, the use of remote communication technology should be exercised.

Residential Care

- Where there is a plan for a child to be placed into Residential care the child/young person should be tested prior to admission.
- For urgent situations, where delaying placement would likely have an adverse impact on a child's health and wellbeing routine testing of asymptomatic children prior to urgent placement is not required.
- In the event of an urgent placement testing should take place as soon as possible and a multi-agency risk assessed approach should be taken. Public Health Wales will provide specialist health protection advice to support a risk assessment.
- All Residential Care Homes must operate in line with “Guidance to Prevent COVID-19 Among Care Home Residents and Manage Cases, Incidents & Outbreaks in Residential Care Settings in Wales” published by Public Health Wales.
- All staff working and visitors will be expected to wear PPE in line with “Personal protective equipment (PPE) – resource for care workers working in transmission in England” published by Public Health England.



- All Residential Care Homes will need to operate effective Infection and prevention control in line with recommendations set out in “Covid-19: Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings – Infection prevention and control recommendations” published by Public Health England.
- All Residential Care Homes will need to operate in line with the expectations set out under Level 4 in the attached Welsh Government Guidance:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-12/coronavirus-control-plan-alert-levels-in-wales-for-social-care-services-for-adults-and-children.pdf>

Multi-Agency Panels

At Alert Level 4 all multi-agency panels will continue to be held virtually.

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