

Public Document Pack

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich
dewis iaith.*

*We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please
let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

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

Gofynnwch am / Ask for:

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Dear Councillor,

CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB / remotely via Microsoft Teams - on **Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 14:30.**

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.
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 12
To receive for approval the Minutes of 21/11/2023
4. Volunteer Policy Review 13 - 28
5. Joint Inspection Of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) In Bridgend 12-16 June 2023 29 - 84
6. Infection Prevention and Control Policy 85 - 100
7. Development Of Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 2028 101 - 112
8. Housing Support Programme Strategy (Homelessness Strategy) 2022 - 2026 113 - 152
9. Hybrid Working Policy 153 - 166
10. Information Report for Noting 167 - 188
11. Urgent Items
To consider any items of business that by reason of special circumstances the chairperson is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency in accordance

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with paragraph 2.4 (e) of the Cabinet Procedure Rules within the Constitution.

12. Exclusion of the Public

The following items are not for publication as they contain exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 14 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

If following the application of the public interest test Cabinet resolves pursuant to the Act to consider these items in private, the public will be excluded from the meeting during such consideration.

13. Approval of Exempt Minutes

189 - 190

To receive for approval the exempt minutes of 21/11/2023

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. 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 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / .643696

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

JC Spanswick

N Farr

W R Goode

Councillors

J Gebbie

HJ David

HM Williams

Councillors

JPD Blundell

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB / REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS, ON TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 2:30PM

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

W R Goode

J Gebbie

HM Williams

JPD Blundell

Present Virtually

JC Spanswick

N Farr

Officers:

Nimi Chandrasena
Alex Rawlin
Rachel Keepins
Carys Lord
Claire Marchant
Janine Nightingale
Kelly Watson
Mark Shephard
Kate Pask

Democratic Services Officer - Support
Corporate Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Democratic Services Manager
Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Corporate Director - Communities
Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
Chief Executive
Corporate Improvement Officer - Performance

Declarations of Interest

None

252. Approval of Minutes

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| Decision Made | That the minutes of the 17/10/23 were approved as a true and accurate record. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

253. Code of Corporate Governance

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet considered and approved the amendments to the Code of Corporate Governance as set out in Appendix A.</p> <p>In approving the amendments to the Code, Members noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of this work to the management of the Council.• The avenues available if it was thought the core principles have been breached.• The contribution of the Governance and Audit Committee to the development of the Code. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

254. Private Rent Sector Leasing Scheme

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noted the update with regards to the ending of the current private rent sector leasing scheme arrangements with Cartrefi Hafod.• Approved the implementation of the Leasing Scheme Wales based on the number of properties to be brought into the scheme as outlined at paragraph 3.9.• Delegated authority to the Head of Partnership and Performance in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into any funding agreements and/or any further deeds and documents which are supplemental to the scheme and approve any minor changes to the scheme in the future, which are within agreed budgets. |
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| | <p>In approving the recommendations, Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanked Cartrefi Hafod for their work, and The Wallich for stepping in as the current arrangements are being decommissioned. • Noted the budget pressures on organisations in this area of work. • Requested more information about the Local Housing Allowance, especially whether it increased in line with inflation. The Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change confirmed that the allowance was reviewed annually, and Members would be sent more information about the rate of increase. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

255. Appointment of Local Authority Governors

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that progress made in connection with the design of the project. • Delegated authority to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy and Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, to progress the invitation to tender for the construction works following the completion of the design process. • Noted that a future report to both Cabinet and Council will come forward in due course to set out the financial implications of the project, prior to entering into a construction contract for the Grand Pavilion project. <p>In approving the recommendations, Members discussed the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of managing risk and timescales. • Putting in place the most appropriate procurement route in accordance with the authority's Contract Procedure Rules. • Identifying all potential sources of funding to complete the project. • That the project had been included on the Forward Work Programme for Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

256. Porthcawl Grand Pavilion Project Procurement Update

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| Decision Made | |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

257. Energy Company Obligation (ECO) 4 and Local Authority (LA) Flex Joint Statement of Intent and Memorandum of Understanding

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to Bridgend County Borough Council becoming a member of ECO4 Flex and that the Corporate Director Communities shall be the dedicated responsible person for the ECO4 Flex Scheme. • Delegated authority to the Corporate Director Communities in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy and Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change, to make any required amendments and to agree final versions of the draft Memorandum of Understanding and Joint Statement of Intent. • Delegated authority to the Corporate Director – Communities to sign the final approved Memorandum of Understanding and sign and to publish the final approved Joint Statement of Intent, and thereafter update these documents with any factual updates as appropriate. • Delegated authority to the Corporate Director Communities to accept a funding offer of £16,000 from Welsh Government to support the delivery of ECO4 Flex in line with the financial information contained within section 8. <p>In approving the recommendations, Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed concern about the potential costs involved in administering the eligibility process, and whether the funding offer of £16,000 and £300 per applicant would be sufficient to cover all costs. • It was noted that GPs, whilst they could play a role in establishing need as a result of the diagnosis of health conditions, could not be involved in evaluating eligibility on the basis of income. • The Deputy Leader expressed concern about how this scheme had been promoted with NHS colleagues and whether they would refer potential beneficiaries to the Council. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Deputy Leader requested that, though the regional Cabinet had agreed the eligibility criteria, she felt it was important they were reviewed at some point. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

258. Service Level Agreement with Torfaen County Borough Council

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed that Torfaen County Borough Council assume the role of 'Lead Local Authority' for the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Service Level Agreement (Appendix 1). Delegated authority to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy and Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change to enter into the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Service Level Agreement, and any subsequent amendments or extensions to it as agreed by the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Strategic Management Board and to enter into any further deeds and documents which are ancillary to the agreement. Agreed the appointment of the Employability and Enterprise Manager to represent BCBC on the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund Regional People and Skills Strategic Management Board. <p>In approving the recommendations, Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed concern that the valued local Employability service could be compromised by this regional collaboration initiative, and that any regional developments need to fit seamlessly with what is provided in the County Borough. Asked for clarification that this was the most cost-effective way to deliver some services. The Corporate Director - Communities confirmed this. That outreach was an important part of delivery. Initiatives needed to be promoted in communities and online. That all Members needed to be notified about this development. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

259. Outcome of Consultation on Community Recycling Centres Closure

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted the outcomes of the consultation on proposals to close each CRC one day per week. • Gave approval to continue to progress the closure of each site one day per week. • Authorised the Corporate Director of Communities to liaise with the exiting and incoming waste contractors to implement the closure of the CRC sites on one day per week. <p>In noting the recommendations, Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed the role of consultations in determining budget cuts. • Noted that abuse should not be included in public documents, and that references to it in the report should be redacted. • Noted that the Pyle Community Recycling Centre was awaiting its operating licence. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

260. Social Services And Wellbeing Directorate Policies – Admissions And Commencement Of Service And Anti-Bullying Policies

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet considered and approved the new policies of Admissions and Commencement of Service at Appendix 1 and Anti-Bullying in Children’s Residential Care Services at Appendix 2.</p> <p>In approving the policies, Members noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the policies had been developed as a result of priority action notices. • That a link should be provided in the Admissions and Commencement of Service Policy to highlight the financial safeguarding procedures that exist for each service. • That bullying was a horrible behaviour to experience, and our young people are already in the position of being exceptionally vulnerable. It was vital to do everything possible to support them. • That the phrase “most often girls” should be removed from Section 8.3 (Relational Bullies) of the Anti-Bullying Policy. • That appropriate training, especially in role-play, would be provided. |
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| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

261. Social Services Representations and Complaints Annual Report 2022/23

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet approved the Annual Report on social services representations and complaints for 2022/23 attached as Appendix 1.</p> <p>In approving the report, Members noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That there were more compliments than complaints.• That it would be valuable to see a breakdown of the compliments and complaints in adult social care.• The critical importance of a stable workforce to the delivery of services. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

262. Corporate Safeguarding Policy Review

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| Decision Made | <p>Cabinet approved the updated Corporate Safeguarding Policy at Appendix 1 to this report.</p> <p>In approving the report, Members noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That safeguarding covered not just risk posed to children, or indeed to vulnerable adults, but it is about child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, and all manner of things we would not expect to see at all.• Council staff are instrumental in identifying, more often than not, any human trafficking or slavery that is going on.• There are a lot of women, and indeed men out there, that are at risk of all sorts of abuse from partners and from family members, and we need to be cognizant of that fact.• That safeguarding is everybody's business, for all services and all employees, as well as all organisations.• That the annual report of the Regional Safeguarding Board would be appended to the internal |
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| | annual report and sent to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In terms of the implementation of the self-evaluation process, it will be piloted in Q4 and then fully implemented from the new financial year. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

263. Representation On The Joint Committee Of The National Adoption Service For Wales And Foster Wales

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| Decision Made | Cabinet appointed the Cabinet Member, Social Services and Health as the representative to sit on the Joint Committee for the National Adoption Service for Wales and Foster Wales. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

264. Corporate Self-Assessment 2022/23

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| Decision Made | Cabinet endorsed the corporate self-assessment report 2022-23 in Appendix 1, to be submitted to Council for approval on 22 November 2022. |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

265. Cabinet, Council And Overview And Scrutiny Committees Forward Work Programmes

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| Decision Made | Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the period 1 November 2023 to 29 February 2024 at Appendix 1.• Noted the Council and Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Forward Work Programmes for the same period, as shown at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of the report, respectively. |
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| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |
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266. Urgent Items

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| Decision Made | None |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

267. Exclusion of the Public

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| Decision Made | <p>That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 14 and 16 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act.</p> <p>Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the following item in private, with the public excluded from the meeting, as it was considered that in all circumstances relating to the item, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.</p> |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

268. Redevelopment Of Maesteg Town Hall

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| Decision Made | Exempt Decision |
| Date Decision Made | 21 November 2023 |

CABINET - TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2023

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 5:30pm

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| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | VOLUNTEER POLICY REVIEW |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING |
| Responsible Officer: | ALIAH AWAN-WILLIAMS CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING OFFICER |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules. |
| Executive Summary: | <p>This report presents a new Volunteer Policy for Cabinet approval. The policy sets out how the Council meets the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 in safeguarding children and adults at risk.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This policy seeks to ensure that the Council has effective arrangements in place for volunteering. It provides a framework for every directorate and service area within and across the Council. It sets out responsibilities in relation to volunteers and duties of the team manager. It lays out the methods by which the Council will be assured that it is fulfilling its duties and that effective practices are in place to support individuals to flourish and be part of our thriving community.</p> |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Volunteer Policy which is **Appendix 1** to this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council requires a Volunteer Policy to set out how it fulfills its statutory responsibilities for how we interact and engage volunteers.
- 2.2 The policy provides a framework for volunteers that all directorates and departments within the Council should operate consistently within. The intention of the policy is to support quality service delivery, promote good practice and ensure services are delivered in a way that volunteers are supported to fulfil their potential.
- 2.3 The policy is intended to be enabling; to ensure that all parts of the Council understand how to implement effective volunteer management arrangements.

This is a policy for a positive, preventative and proactive approach to volunteering. To be effective, the policy must be owned and implemented across the whole Council and promoted with partners and in wider communities.

- 2.4 The policy is intended as an enabler of a positive culture, of proactively identifying, mitigating, managing, and minimising risks to safety and wellbeing, whilst ensuring decisive and timely action to address serious concerns.
- 2.5 This process has been overseen by the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Board and consultation with Trade Unions has taken place.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Volunteer Policy appended to this report at **Appendix 1** has been developed to provide robust policy in the engagement, management and monitoring of volunteers by the Council. It recognises that volunteers make a considerable contribution to the wellbeing of people and communities in the county borough and that volunteering should be a positive experience for volunteers themselves.
- 3.2 The policy provides a clear set of requirements for the Council's volunteer programme which aims to: define the role and value of involving volunteers within the organisation; ensure consistency that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly; set out how staff and managers should support and supervise volunteers effectively to ensure the safety of volunteers, staff and others; and, address how to resolve any issues that may arise.
- 3.3 Every directorate is required under the policy to ensure that they monitor the number of volunteers engaged and is able to provide assurance regarding their safe recruitment, compliance with mandatory training and oversight of the work they do.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:-

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| Involvement | The Volunteer Policy has been developed through the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Board which includes members from across the Council who have been engaged in the development of this policy. There has also been engagement with Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) in the development of this policy and engagement with Trade Union partners. |
| Long term | There will be a positive long-term impact of this policy due to meeting regulatory requirements as well as providing a safe and effective framework for volunteering. |
| Prevention | Volunteers can be engaged in a variety of roles including those which prevent escalation of need to key partners. |
| Integration | This policy will be implemented and used across the Council and promoted to key partners. |
| Collaboration | There is strong collaboration, particularly with BAVO, to promote the valuable contribution that volunteers make to the quality of life in the county borough. |

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no sustainability or climate change implications arising directly from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Council's Volunteer Policy has been developed to ensure it is robust and provides clear standards for all directorates and services.
- 7.2 The Volunteer Policy has been developed to ensure that volunteers are engaged safely, undertake mandatory safeguarding awareness training and that there is robust monitoring of the work that volunteers do.
- 7.3 The implementation of this reviewed policy will further enable the Council to robustly fulfil its volunteering responsibilities.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no additional financial implications from implementing this reviewed policy.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Volunteer Policy at **Appendix 1** to this report.

Background documents: None

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Bridgend County Borough Council

Volunteer Policy



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|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| DOCUMENT CONTROL | |
| Document Title | Volunteer Policy |
| Previous Publication Date | |
| DOCUMENT APPROVAL | |
| This document received approval from: | Date: |
| Group Manager HR & OD | 23/11/23 |
| Trade Unions | 22/11/23 |
| Fincance and legal | 27/11/23 |
| Corporate Management Board | |
| Cabinet/Council | |
| REVISION HISTORY | |
| Revision History | |

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1. Introduction

The Council recognises the significant contribution that volunteers make to the lives of our residents and the vibrancy of our communities. We also recognise that for the Council to support and work effectively with volunteers it is important that appropriate support and a consistent approach is in place to engage with volunteers. This policy aims to ensure that all Council officers can apply such a consistent approach when planning directly engaging volunteers in our work. It is recognised that third sector partners who may or may not be commissioned by the Council also play a hugely valuable role in engaging volunteers in accordance with their own policies and procedures.

The Council recognizes the expertise and role of Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO), the County Voluntary Council and its Bridgend County Volunteer Centre (CVC) and will seek guidance and advice wherever appropriate to ensure it is up to date with the latest best practice policies and procedures in supporting volunteers. The Council is committed to working in partnership with the CVC as well as the wider third sector to promote the importance and effectiveness of volunteering within the Council.

2. Policy Statement

The policy provides a framework for how the Council will manage volunteers and what volunteers can expect from the Council. The policy applies to all Council departments utilising volunteers.

The Council acknowledge the significant role that volunteers play both in supporting service delivery and in promoting community wellbeing. Volunteers must comply with Council policies whilst engaged in volunteering with the Council. An induction checklist will be provided to all volunteers to ensure they are aware of the Council expectations in this respect.

3. Scope

It is important when considering volunteer roles that a distinction is made from paid staff roles, to ensure that there is no risk of job substitution or unrealistic expectations.

4. Definition of a Volunteer

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship. It provides valuable work experience for people which may support their future employed careers. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. The volunteer relationship is binding in honor, trust, and mutual understanding.

4.1 Vision for Volunteering

The Council is committed to making the county borough a great place to live, work and visit. We have a vision of thriving communities where volunteers play an active

role in:

- shaping local service delivery
- promoting cohesion
- positively influencing decision making

We will work with local communities and partners to develop a diverse range of suitable volunteering activities that are relevant for all people in the Council. We want to support volunteering opportunities that develop skills within our communities to help individuals to enter the workplace and increase their employability prospects.

4.2 Our Volunteering Principles

When assigning volunteers, the Council will adhere to the following principles:

- volunteers will not be engaged in work which facilitates the loss of an existing employee's post, nor on any tasks or projects which were done by paid employees whose posts have since been deleted.
- volunteers will not be used to provide cover for paid staff (for example where paid staff are on leave due to sickness, holiday, maternity, or industrial action).

4.3 What opportunities can the Council offer volunteers?

There is a wide range of volunteering opportunities the Council can offer add value to service provision such as:

- Environmental work
- Assisting with delivery of the Councils' projects,
- Assisting with provision of lessons and services such as reading to children in schools and supporting road safety
- helping to maintain and promote our green and open spaces and social care visiting schemes.

This list is not exhaustive, and officers will be willing to consider other options for volunteering with the Council. However, officers need to take a balanced view on this regarding the potential benefit for the Council, the volunteer, the resources required/available to support any work; and any potential issues that this may cause.

4.4 Raising Awareness of Volunteering Opportunities

The Council will, where appropriate, promote volunteering and local opportunities by working in partnership with BAVO and utilising the BAVO 'Volunteering Wales' recruitment portal. The Council will also use events such as employability fairs to raise the profile of volunteering as a route to develop work skills. The Council will also signpost potential volunteers to BAVO and other relevant external partners where appropriate placements within the Council are not available.

5. CONTACT DETAILS

Below are the main contact details that a volunteer will need in the case of any

queries or problems that may arise.

| Position | Name | Telephone | Email |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health & Wellbeing | To access some of our health and wellbeing resources through the team manager. https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/social-care-and-wellbeing/prevention-and-wellbeing/ | | |
| Lead officers for safeguarding | Safeguarding for children Safeguarding early help | Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Team (Children) Phone: 01656 642320 | Email: mashcentra@bridgend.gov.uk |
| Safeguarding and Quality Manager/ Adult Safeguarding services manager | Safeguarding for adults | Safeguarding Adults Team Phone: 01656 642477 | Email: referrals only to AdultsafeguardingMASH@bridgend.gov.uk |
| Emergency Services | Emergency Services | Phone: 999 | |
| Non-urgent advice from the Police or to log a concern | | Phone: 101 | |

6. Engaging Volunteers

Should the Council wish to engage a volunteer they will need approval from a senior manager and adopt a process that is fair and equitable and adhere to safe recruitment principles. They must follow the Council's and Recruitment and Selection Protocol and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy. All managers must ensure that volunteers are aware of and have access to the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy. The manager is responsible for ensuring that no volunteer commences their role unless they have been safely engaged. This includes undertaking a DBS check if operating in a role which is undertaking regulated activity.

6.1 Regulated Activity

Regulated activity is defined as unsupervised activity with the opportunity for contact with children and young people or adults at risk. If the task sits within a regulated activity area, then a DBS check will apply in accordance with the Council's DBS Policy.

6.2 One-off volunteering

Unless a volunteer is involved, or will be involved, in regulated activity with children or with vulnerable adults generally there is no legal requirement for a volunteer to have a DBS check for a one off event. This will be monitored by team managers within each directorate.

6.3 Specific Requirements for Volunteers who are under 16.

Volunteering work requires a DBS check if the volunteering activity involves regular contact with under 18s – even if the volunteer is also under 18 (but over 16). Before engaging a volunteer under the age of 16, the consent of a parent / carer must be obtained. Clear information regarding the activities involved must be provided to the parent/ carer and the volunteer.

7. Equal Opportunities

The Council is an equal opportunity employer further information can be found here: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Statement.

7.1 Responsibility for coordinating use of volunteers.

The manager will:

- Asses the role requirements of all volunteers
- Ensure the volunteer is safely recruited
- Provide appropriate induction, supervision and monitor performance
- Keep a record of all volunteers engaged by in their service area, ensuring they understand where the volunteer is deployed and that all recruitment checks have been undertaken.

The manager will determine the requirement for a DBS on the assessment of the role and the eligibility of the role under DBS legislation and in accordance with the Council's DBS Policy.

The role of the manager is to:

- Provide advice and assistance regarding engaging of volunteers.
- Ensure consistent application of this policy and related procedures.
- Respond to any issues arising while volunteering relationship.

8. Communicating Safeguarding Issues or Concerns

Safeguarding children and adults at risk from abuse is everybody's responsibility. The Council is committed to ensuring that people living in the County are safe and protected and that its statutory duties to safeguard and protect children, young people and adults at risk are discharged. The Council workforce shares a responsibility, both collectively and individually, to ensure that children and adults at risk are protected from harm. For further information please link with the Council's Corporate [safeguarding policy](#).

9. Induction

The Council will provide all volunteers with an appropriate induction to the service and tasks that they will undertake. Information could include:

- A document outlining tasks and expectations.
- A volunteering agreement to be signed by both parties on start date.

- Access to relevant Council policies will be via the manager.

10. Insurance

Volunteers operating on behalf and under the control of the Council are regarded as Employees for insurance purposes, and are automatically included within the Local Authority insurance policies whilst carrying out their volunteering activities.

11. Reimbursement

Volunteers are unpaid. However, in certain circumstances, the Council will reimburse volunteers for approved out of pocket expenses, which are appropriately receipted in accordance with [the Intranet petty cash system](#) this is to be operated by the team manager.

11.1 ID Cards

All volunteers, as a minimum, will be issued with a volunteer's badge found at reception. These should be signed for when they are given to volunteers and when they are then handed back after their visit. The volunteer must return all such items when the volunteering placement comes to an end.

11.2 Confidentiality and Data Protection

During their volunteering opportunity with the Council, a volunteer may become aware of personal data and / or confidential information about the Council, its employees, customers /clients/ and / or suppliers. Volunteers should not disclose this information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the explicit consent of the Council or the party concerned. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is in the public domain (unless it has been made public by the volunteer's breach of confidentiality) or where the law permits or requires disclosure. In addition, information, and management (storing, handling and use) of personal data needs to comply with data protection law.

It is a criminal offence under data protection legislation to knowingly or recklessly obtain, retain (which may have been lawfully obtained) or disclose personal data without the consent of Council as the data controller.

12. Volunteering in schools

Volunteers can play a valuable role in supporting schools. The governing bodies of schools who engage volunteers should ensure there is a clear policy for the engagement of volunteers which aligns with the standards in this Council policy and the requirements of Keeping Learners Safe, statutory Welsh Government guidance on safeguarding in school settings.

13. Key Policies

The Council have several key policies which can be accessed via the team manager, examples of policies include:

Social media: We expect all volunteers comply with the principles of the Council's [social media policy](#).

Whistleblowing: Although volunteers are not protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which covers whistleblowing as part of employment law, volunteers can access and use the Council's [Whistleblowing policy](#) where they feel necessary to do so; but they will not receive statutory protection or compensation, as they are not Council employees. If a volunteer has a concern about the running of a project or the organisation, the team manager should be notified in the first instance but the disclosure routes in the Whistleblowing Policy may be followed if this is not resolved.

Alcohol and substance misuse: The Council operates a zero alcohol and drugs protocol in which the consumption of alcohol immediately prior to or during the working day is not permitted on health and safety grounds. All volunteers will be expected to comply with this protocol and should be made aware of this as part of their volunteer induction. More information can be found on the Council's [Alcohol and substance misuse protocol](#).

Health and Safety: The Council have a responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers. Volunteers must, always, follow the Council's health and safety policies and procedures. Team Managers must make volunteers aware of health and safety arrangements as part of their induction / initial training and as necessary thereafter. Appropriate equipment will be provided for reasons of health and safety when undertaking their volunteering role. More information can be found on the Council's [Health and safety policy](#).

14. Evaluation and Review: This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

15. Volunteer checklist

- The Volunteering Policy
- Risk assessment
- Mandatory training including Safeguarding training
- The volunteering agreement
- List of tasks and expectations
- A named contact officer.

INDUCTION

| ACTION | COMMENT / DATE | DONE | INITIAL |
|---|----------------|------|---------|
| Team manager to create volunteer form which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of tasks - Personal details and relevant experience. - References if appropriate - Copy of completed induction checklist. | | | |
| Stage 1 – Pre-Induction Checklist Stage 2 – Relevant induction Essential Information | | | |

16. Volunteer Agreement Form (containing confidentiality clause and Data Protection clause)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Effective date: _____

Authorised Signature: _____

Full name:

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

On behalf of the Council above [delete if individual], I understand that in connection with volunteering work with Bridgend County Borough Council (“the Council”) I may from time to time have access to, or be required to process, or be made aware of, personal data and / or confidential information processed by or on behalf of the Council.

I hereby undertake, agree, and acknowledge as follows:

That all information of whatsoever nature (whether oral, written or held on any information system), containing or consisting of material of a personal, technical, operational, administrative, economic, planning, business or financial nature and relating to the Council or any of its clients or partners (such information together referred to herein as “confidential information”) shall be treated as strictly confidential and shall not, without the specific written approval of a Head of Service of the Council, be disclosed to any persons, other than those authorised to receive it.

That no 'confidential information' shall be used by me for any purpose other than in connection with the business for the Council.

That the obligations herein contained to maintain the confidentiality of the 'confidential information', and not to use the same, shall continue after the termination of the business. That in the event of any confidential information being removed from the offices of the Council for the purpose of the business or for any other reason, I undertake to keep the said information secure.

That at the termination of the business with the Council I will return to the Council immediately all the 'confidential information' in my possession or control as far as the same shall be in tangible form. This shall not apply to any confidential information which is already in the public domain, other than because of unauthorised disclosure by me, or any other person.

I acknowledge that it is a criminal offence under data protection legislation to knowingly or recklessly obtain, retain (which may have been lawfully obtained) or disclose personal data without the consent of the Council as the data controller.

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| | |
|--|---|
| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | JOINT INSPECTION OF CHILD PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS (JICPA) IN BRIDGEND 12-16 JUNE 2023 |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING |
| Responsible Officer: | ANNETTE PARKES BUSINESS CHANGE PROGRAMME MANAGER |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules |
| Executive Summary: | <p>Between 12 and 16 June 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), Estyn and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children aged 11 and under who are at risk of abuse and neglect in Bridgend County.</p> <p>A copy of the inspection report is attached, along with the associated Joint Action Plan.</p> |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the inspection report of the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in Bridgend. This took place during June 2023. Cabinet is requested to note the report and the local authority improvement actions identified in the associated Joint Action Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 Between 12 and 16 June 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and Estyn carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect of children in Bridgend.

- 2.2 The JICPA reviewed:

- the response to allegations of abuse and neglect at the point of identification

- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals
- protecting children aged 11 and under at risk of abuse and neglect
- the leadership and management of this work
- the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding partner arrangements in relation to this work

2.3 The date of the improvement check was 12-16 June 2023, and the inspection team consisted of 15 inspectors from the 4 inspectorates.

2.4 The inspection team reviewed the experiences of people's journey through sampling agency records and file tracking children's care and support arrangements. The inspection team case sampled ten files and tracked six. Tracking a child's record included conversations with the child where appropriate, their family or carers, key worker, the key worker's manager, and other professionals involved.

2.5 The Joint Inspection team :

- held focus groups with staff and two professional groups focused on the working arrangements and outcomes for two of the tracked files
- visited a small sample of primary schools and a special school, where they conducted meetings with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead and small groups of children
- interviewed a range of employees across different agencies
- interviewed a range of partner organisations, representing both statutory and third sector
- reviewed supporting documentation sent to the inspectorates for the purpose of the inspection
- administered surveys to children's services staff, third sector organisations and children and family members
- observed child protection conferences and practice as part of the inspection activity
- conducted a pre-inspection headteacher survey and visited a small sample of primary schools during the inspection week
- evaluated samples of health and well-being schemes of work and looked at samples of pupils' work. This included holding a 'listening to learner' sessions in all schools visited

2.6 The report of the findings would be published on the CIW website and provided to the Minister for Health and Social Services.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 The JICPA Inspection report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.2 The JICPA found that in common with many areas across Wales, recruitment and retention of key staff is impacting on children's safeguarding arrangements. This is exacerbated by high levels of demand and increasing complexity of children's and

families' needs. The workforce position within social services remains fragile. Deficits in the number of social workers and a competitive market has resulted in an increased reliance on agency social workers. Despite these workforce issues, inspectors found that significant actions have been taken and improvements have been made by Bridgend County Borough Council's children's services and partners since Care Inspectorate Wales' previous full inspection which took place in May 2022 and the follow-up visit in November 2022.

3.3 **Positive practice includes:**

- Professionals identify children in need of help and protection and report their concerns accordingly enabling accurate, early decision-making.
- Actual and potential risks are identified well with proportionate actions taken to protect children.
- There are examples of the local authority and partners responding promptly and effectively to meet the needs of children, especially where acute need and risk is identified.
- Schools across Bridgend county work well with a wide range of services to support children and families.
- There is good multi-agency attendance and participation in child protection meetings arranged under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

3.4 Overall, systems and relationships are in place to facilitate effective partnership working where a child is at risk of abuse and neglect. There are, however, **areas of child protection which are inconsistent and require attention. These include:**

- Challenges in sharing information between agencies in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- Immediate actions are taken to promote children's safety but there can be gaps following an initial enquiry. This may represent a missed opportunity to share essential information and discuss the outcome of the enquiry with all relevant agencies.
- The quality of care and support protection plans is too variable.
- There are gaps in recording and in supervision which need to be addressed by managerial oversight and a focus on the quality of practice.

Summary of findings

3.5 In common with many areas across Wales, recruitment and retention of key staff is impacting on children's safeguarding arrangements. This is exacerbated by high levels of demand and increasing complexity of children's and families' needs. The workforce position within social services remains fragile. Deficits in the number of social workers and a competitive market has resulted in an increased reliance on agency social workers.

3.6 Despite this context, overall, systems and relationships are in place to facilitate effective partnership working where a child is at risk of abuse and neglect. Partners are working to a shared ethos of safeguarding children at different levels of vulnerability. Senior leaders in the local authority, police force and health board articulate a shared vision with a positive approach to regional safeguarding arrangements. Managers and leaders provide a positive working together culture. The local authority has taken action to instigate learning following recent critical

incidents. The subsequent improvement and joint action plans are overseen by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTMSB).

- 3.7 From the sample of records viewed as part of the inspection the inspectorates found no concerns for the safety of children. Actions generally happen within timescales with support and protection in place to meet needs. There are, however, areas of child protection which are inconsistent and require attention. Professionals make appropriate referrals but partner agencies, such as police and health, are struggling to resource the increase in child protection activity. Challenges remain in sharing information between agencies in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is envisaged a new IT platform will address this.
- 3.8 Immediate actions are taken to promote children's safety but there can be gaps following a Section 47 enquiry (S47). Post enquiry feedback (including single agency enquiries often undertaken via children's services) generally involves social services and police, is routinely via email communication, and does not include relevant partners who were involved in the initial strategy discussion. This may represent a missed opportunity to share essential information and discuss the outcome of the enquiry. The quality of care and support protection plans (CASPP) is too variable. Plans are adult, rather than child focused, and without clear outcomes for the child identified. There are gaps in recording and in supervision which need to be addressed by managerial oversight and a focus on the quality of practice.
- 3.9 Schools across Bridgend work well with a wide range of services to support children and families. There is good multi-agency attendance and participation in child protection meetings arranged under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP). This includes initial and review child protection case conference and core groups. The MASH facilitates adherence to the WSP and encourages close partnership working. Multi-agency contribution is evident in addressing the child's safety through the care and support protection plan.
- 3.10 The JICPA report outlines more detailed findings in the four main areas of Wellbeing, People, Partnerships, and Integration and Prevention, outlining strengths and areas for improvement for each agency in each of the four areas.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- 3.11 On behalf of the partnership, the local authority prepared a written statement of proposed action responding to the findings outlined in the JICPA report. This was a multi-agency response which involved Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and South Wales Police and outlined the set out the actions for the partnership and, where appropriate, individual agencies.
- 3.12 A JICPA Action Plan has been developed to reflect the recommendations for improvement outlined in the JICPA report. The JICPA Action Plan can be found at **Appendix 2**. The progress to implement areas for improvement and corresponding local authority actions will be overseen internally in the Council by the Social Services Improvement Board (SSIB). All inspection recommendations are included on the regulatory tracker which is reported through the Corporate Performance Assessment. The improvement actions identified for South Wales Police and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board will be monitored by individual agencies own governance arrangements. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board

(RSB) is the statutory body responsible for leading safeguarding in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region and holding agencies to account. It will hold partners to account for achievements of the improvements identified. Progress will also be reported into Scrutiny Committee. A copy of the JICPA Action Plan will also be submitted to CIW and will form the basis of any future joint or single agency activity by the inspectorates.

3.13 On 23 November 2023 the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 considered the report and JICPA Action Plan and provided comments.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 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 Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) focusses on sustainable prevention and well-being 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** – one of the four themes within the JICPA inspection is Prevention. The Joint Inspectorates have identified areas of strength for Prevention in their report. The areas for improvement are also included, and actions for improvement have been addressed within the Joint Action Plan at **Appendix 2**.
- **Integration** – one of the four themes within the JICPA inspection is Partnerships and Integration. The Joint Inspectorates have identified areas of strength for Integration and Partnerships in their report. The areas for improvement are also included, and actions for improvement have been addressed within the Joint Action Plan at **Appendix 2**. 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 refers to work with statutory partners as this was the basis for the JICPA inspection and the development of the response to the inspection in the Joint Action Plan.

- **Collaboration** – The collaborative approaches described in the report, are managed and monitored through various strategic and collaborative boards across Directorates and with partners, including the Social Services Improvement Board, and the Regional Safeguarding Board.
- **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. As part of the JICPA inspection the views of stakeholders; children and young people, parents and carers and partners, were listened too and taken into account by the inspectorates of the four statutory agencies.

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

- **A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable:** Providing high quality services for children and families and early help services, and safeguarding people who are at risk of significant harm, 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.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 This JICPA Inspection report and associated Joint Action Plan outlines and proposes changes that will be required to improve performance and compliance with the statutory safeguarding accountabilities of partners in Bridgend for children and young people. Implementation of the plan will ensure effective safeguarding arrangements and support to the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people for whom the Council is corporate parent, and will work towards improving the outcomes for children, young people, and families in Bridgend.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this inspection report, there are a number of significant pressures that have been identified in the Action Plan, particularly in the areas of workforce and service provision (placements) in children's social care which will be considered during the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy planning process. However, delivery of any agreed actions may be impacted by the current challenging budget situation that the Council is facing.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet note the report on the Joint Inspection of Child Protection arrangements in Bridgend and the local authority improvement actions identified in the Joint Action Plan.

Background documents

None

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**Bridgend County Borough
Council, Cwm Taf
Morgannwg University
Health Board, South Wales
Police**

**Report of Joint Inspection
Review of Child Protection
Arrangements**

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

Between 12 and 16 June 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Estyn carried out a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect of children in Bridgend.

This report outlines our findings about the effectiveness of partnership working and of the work of individual agencies in Bridgend.

Scope of the inspection

The Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) reviewed:

- the response to allegations of abuse and neglect at the point of identification
- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals
- protecting children aged 11 and under at risk of abuse and neglect
- the leadership and management of this work
- the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding partner arrangements in relation to this work

We have endeavoured to use plain language to describe the findings from the JICPA. There are a number of terms mentioned we describe here:

- BCBC or LA - Bridgend County Borough Council or Local Authority
- CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- CASPP - Care and Support Protection Plan
- CPRs - Child Practice Reviews
- CRISP - Concerns Regarding Inter-Agency Safeguarding Practice Protocol
- CTMSB - Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board is a statutory partnership made up of the agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area.
- CTMUHB - Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- DBS - Disclosure and Barring Service
- DSL - Designated Safeguarding Lead is the person appointed to take lead responsibility for child protection issues in schools.
- DVPN - Domestic Violence Prevention Notices
- EET - Education Engagement Team
- ED - Emergency Department
- ELSA - Emotional Literacy Support Assistant is a social and emotional intervention programme delivered by trained staff in primary and secondary schools.
- ESR - Electronic Staff Record in the health board
- FCR - Force Control Room (Police)
- IAA - Information, Advice and Assistance

- IDVA - Independent Domestic Violence Advisers providing help and support to victims of domestic violence.
- IRO - Independent Reviewing Officers
- MARAC - MARACs are Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences. They are regular meetings of professionals who discuss how to help individuals who are most at risk of serious harm due to domestic violence and abuse.
- MASH- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
- MIU - Minor Injuries Unit
- Operation Encompass - Operation Encompass is a partnership between police and schools, a school can only join if the local police force has already joined Operation Encompass. One of the principles of Operation Encompass is that all incidents of domestic abuse are shared with schools, not just those where an offence can be identified.
- PPN - Public Protection Notices
- PSC - Public Service Centre is the police force's control room.
- PRU - Pupil referral unit where pupils with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties attend for short periods of normally up to 12 weeks. They receive support to regulate their emotions/behaviour and to re-integrate to mainstream education.
- PRUDIC - Procedural Response to Unexpected Death in Childhood.
- SWP - South Wales Police
- RSB - Regional Safeguarding Board
- Section 47 (S47) - Under section 47 Children Act 1989, a local authority has a duty to investigate if it appears to them that a child in its area is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm.
- SoS - Signs of Safety approach is a relationship-grounded, safety-organised approach to child protection practice, created by researching what works for professionals and families in building meaningful safety for vulnerable and at-risk children.
- TAS - Team around the School (TAS) model aims to support schools to identify and support families earlier when the needs arise by collaboration with key partners
- THRIVE - Threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability, and engagement. A model used to assess the right initial police response to a call for service.
- WSP - Wales Safeguarding Procedures detail the essential roles and responsibilities for practitioners to ensure that they safeguard children and adults who are at risk of abuse and neglect.

1. Summary

In common with many areas across Wales, recruitment and retention of key staff is impacting on children's safeguarding arrangements. This is exacerbated by high levels of demand and increasing complexity of children's and families' needs. The workforce position within social services remains fragile. Deficits in the number of social workers and a competitive market has resulted in an increased reliance on agency social workers.

Despite this context, overall, systems and relationships are in place to facilitate effective partnership working where a child is at risk of abuse and neglect. Partners are working to a shared ethos of safeguarding children at different levels of vulnerability. Senior leaders in the local authority, police force and health board articulate a shared vision with a positive approach to regional safeguarding arrangements. Managers and leaders provide a positive working together culture. The local authority has taken action to instigate learning following recent critical incidents. The subsequent improvement and joint action plans are overseen by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTMSB).

From the sample of records viewed as part of the inspection we found no concerns for the safety of children. Actions generally happen within timescales with support and protection in place to meet needs. There are, however, areas of child protection which are inconsistent and require attention. Professionals make appropriate referrals but partner agencies, such as police and health, are struggling to resource the increase in child protection activity. Challenges remain in sharing information between agencies in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It is envisaged a new IT platform will address this.

Immediate actions are taken to promote children's safety but there can be gaps following a Section 47 enquiry (S47). Post enquiry feedback (including single agency enquiries often undertaken via children's services) generally involves social services and police, is routinely via email communication, and does not include relevant partners who were involved in the initial strategy discussion. This may represent a missed opportunity to share essential information and discuss the outcome of the enquiry. The quality of care and support protection plans (CASPP) is too variable. Plans are adult, rather than child focused, and without clear outcomes for the child identified. There are gaps in recording and in supervision which need to be addressed by managerial oversight and a focus on the quality of practice.

Schools across Bridgend work well with a wide range of services to support children and families. There is good multi-agency attendance and participation in child protection meetings arranged under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP). This includes initial and review child protection case conference and core groups. The MASH facilitates adherence to the WSP and encourages close partnership

working. Multi- agency contribution is evident in addressing the child's safety through the care and support protection plan.

2. Key findings and evidence

2.1 Well-being

Partnership Arrangements

The best examples of child protection practice in Bridgend happen when there is a shared understanding of significant harm. A clear link is evidenced between this harm and the impact on the child. Actual and potential risks are identified well with proportionate actions taken to protect children. These child protection records demonstrate a clear strengths-based approach whilst ensuring the CASPP makes an explicit link between risk and safety.

Professionals identify children in need of help and protection and report their concerns accordingly. This is significant as it enables prompt and accurate early decision-making. Referrals from partners to children's services generally provide relevant detail but measures are being taken to improve their quality. There is a focus in the MASH on collecting good quality information from referrers to enable robust decision-making.

Strategy meetings and child protection conferences are effective forums for information-sharing, planning and decision-making. These are well attended by multi-agency groups. Conferences are well structured and facilitated through collaborative conversations with parents/carers whilst maintaining a focus on risk and safety.

There are examples of the local authority and partners responding promptly and effectively to meet the needs of children, especially where acute need and risk is identified. For example, we saw agencies arranging strategy meetings and visits to children at short notice to ensure their welfare. The subsequent planning was generally focused and based on a good exchange of information across agencies.

Practitioners who report safeguarding concerns are not consistently notified of the outcome of their referral and the reasons for subsequent decisions. There are delays in sharing strategy meeting minutes, although relevant actions are communicated immediately. This is an area to develop to align with the expectations set out in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP).

Sufficiency of resources across partner agencies needs strengthening to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are consistently met and to promote staff well-being. The local authority has responded to unprecedented demand by investing in additional agency workers over its funded establishment to meet statutory duties. Whilst this additional resource is currently needed, it is impacting on the ability of

other agencies to respond consistently and effectively to activity, for example the increase in strategy meetings.

Strengths

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

There is good communication between members of the health board's safeguarding team and staff working directly with children. Public protection nurses based in the MASH provide advice to Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) staff to support a consistent threshold for referrals. All referrals from health staff are copied to the safeguarding team for information and quality assurance. A safeguarding champion model is in the early stages of development. It is anticipated that champions, who will undertake additional safeguarding training and act as a first point of contact within departments, will provide an additional layer of support and advice for staff across the health board. This is particularly the case out of hours when the safeguarding team is not available. The child protection reports seen as part of this inspection were timely and appropriate.

Public protection nurses co-ordinate the collation of health information, invite relevant health professionals and facilitate attendance at strategy meetings.

Where concerns relate to a suspected non-accidental injury, a paediatrician or safeguarding clinical nurse specialist will also attend. The safeguarding hub provides access to child protection medical examinations for children over the age of one, in normal working hours, in a child centred environment. Child protection medical reports are generally produced in a timely way, shared with appropriate professionals, and provide a clear narrative as to whether injuries are believed to be inflicted. It is positive that reports outline additional areas of harm children may be experiencing, such as neglect and emotional abuse. Monthly peer review meetings are well attended and provide a supportive and reflective learning space for paediatricians across the health board to discuss child protection medicals.

The welfare of staff is a prime consideration, and the health board has a well-being service in place. This includes Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA) who can provide support to staff members who are victims of domestic abuse. There is also support via the third sector when staff are invited to attend Procedural Response to Unexpected Death in Childhood (PRUDIC) meetings. A blended model of group supervisions and 1:1 supervision is in place. Some staff groups, such as children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) do not have access to regular formal supervision but access to ad-hoc supervision is readily available for complex situations.

Education

The local authority's education service promotes a strong safeguarding culture in its schools and in the pupil referral unit (PRU). Senior leaders support school leaders well to ensure that they prioritise pupils' emotional development and well-being. The local authority provides schools with regular, comprehensive, and relevant support and guidance in safeguarding matters. This includes a model safeguarding policy and support for managing challenging behaviour. There are regular and beneficial opportunities for designated safeguarding leads (DSL) to meet at a forum to discuss issues, listen to speakers, and share learning and good practice with colleagues. Education officers have recently introduced an authority-wide strategy to improve attendance across all its schools. Attendance rates in Bridgend are currently lower than at the time before the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the attendance of specific vulnerable groups of learners. This reflects the national picture. Schools have played an active role in supporting the local authority's strategy and a pupil-led film highlighting the importance of good attendance is being shared widely from September.

Schools have a very high regard for pupil well-being and safety. Teachers plan helpful activities to teach pupils about the importance of healthy and safe relationships, including how to stay safe online. In all schools visited, pupils felt happy, well cared for, safe and listened to. They all gave relevant examples of how school staff keep them safe and develop their understanding of positive emotional and mental health.

Schools say they receive valuable support and advice from MASH when referring new concerns. School staff feel listened to and able to challenge decisions. Many schools report that relevant agencies within the local authority are forthcoming in sharing information with them when it is necessary. Schools are well represented in a wide range of multi- agency meetings.

Local authority education officers support schools well by providing a broad range of training to staff. As a result, many schools provide effective interventions and approaches to support the needs of vulnerable pupils, including those at risk of harm and subject to a care and support protection plans. These include emotional health interventions such as the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant intervention (ELSA), mindfulness sessions and adopting whole-school trauma-informed strategies for pupils who have experienced adverse childhood experiences. School leaders place a considerable focus on establishing positive and supportive relationships with vulnerable families. Many schools employ their own well-being practitioners or family liaison officers to support this aspect.

South Wales Police

The force has good processes to identify crimes in referrals and record these on their systems so they can be allocated for investigation. There is consistent use of flags and warning markers to highlight vulnerable children on child protection plans.

Call handlers in the Public Service Centre use these flags and markers to identify vulnerable children quickly and assess the level of risk using the THRIVE risk assessment tool to inform the type of response to an incident. They have immediate access to the latest information held on force systems. This not only supports their decision making but provides front line staff with the necessary information to support their response.

Referrals are promptly discussed between police and social services with appropriate outcomes recorded. Initial actions are taken immediately, with risks to linked children not actually present at the incident considered. Police are active partners in strategy meetings and initial child protection conferences. In general, we saw evidence of responsive services to address risk. This includes joint visits and follow up strategy meetings when new information comes to light.

Officers attending incidents sometimes speak with children and record the voice of the child. They share information with the local authority appropriately using Public Protection Notices (PPN). The force also shares information as part of Operation Encompass, to alert safeguarding partners of children witnessing domestic abuse. We saw this happening even when a child was not physically present at the incident which we consider good practice.

Children's Services

Children's services mostly meet statutory duties in line with the requirements of the WSP. We saw effective information sharing in the IAA service and MASH. Additional agency workers assist with screening referrals in a timely manner and actioning immediate safeguarding. Positively, during the screening process there is consideration of people's rights by obtaining consent and evidence of consent being followed up.

Signs of specific risks to individual children are recognised and consideration is given at initial strategy meeting to whether single or joint S47 enquiries are required. S47 enquiries include consideration of siblings or other children who may have contact with people who present a risk to them.

Children are seen by their workers as often as needed in line with their level of need or risk. At an individual level, workers are seeking children's wishes and feelings through the positive use of tools for child centred practice. In the best examples, the outcome of this work informs the quality of the analysis of risk, and the factors within the child's family and community which can help keep them safe. These practices are positively impacting on outcomes for children and families.

For children on the child protection register, statutory visits are mostly undertaken at intervals in line with the WSP. Where children are visited, there is evidence they are seen alone or, if not, a rationale is recorded, and evidence of practitioners observing

their behaviour and interactions with family members informs analysis of their circumstances.

What needs to improve

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

With the significant rise in the volume of referrals and strategy meetings and a lack of public protection nursing resource to meet this increased demand, some strategy meetings are held without health information or relevant health professionals present. However, further meetings to share information are arranged where necessary. Access to timely advice can be challenging because of demand.

Whilst the management of suspected non-accidental injuries is generally consistent within normal working hours, staff voiced less confidence in multi-agency processes out of hours. The response from out of hours social work teams did not always support timely decision making. Although we saw some instances where GPs were asked by social workers to see children with suspected non-accidental injuries, we were informed that this is not a common occurrence and GPs are usually confident in challenging such requests.

The child protection component of the paediatric form used for all children attending the health board's emergency department (ED) at Princess of Wales Hospital was not always completed, meaning a child's social worker may not be notified of a child's attendance at ED. Furthermore, across the health board, there is no access to the child protection register. Staff make enquiries but report that at times they do not get a response and due to workload pressures, they do not always persist. Measures are underway to address this by the local authority providing named health board staff with access to their computer recording system, but currently this is not in line with the WSP.

The school nursing service customarily withdraws from child protection processes following an initial child protection conference if there are no apparent health needs. However, we found that the determination of health needs is usually based on a review of health information recorded on health board computer systems and often does not involve any consultation with the child and their parent/carer. The school nursing service needs to seek opportunities to ensure the child or young person's voice is heard throughout the child protection process.

Education

The distribution of support services across schools, such as the education welfare service, does not always reflect the level of need or context of individual schools. In addition, although the provision of support through area early help hubs to schools is strong, this arrangement does not suit providers whose pupils live across the whole of the authority. This is because staff may have to engage with too many different

professionals. However, the local authority is beginning to plan more strategically to identify specific needs and allocate resource and services accordingly.

South Wales Police

The MASH teams are under-resourced with multiple vacancies. This has adversely impacted on some joint working such as the screening of referrals. The police computer systems within MASH have significant issues with connectivity at times.

Child neglect and abuse offences are not always investigated by specialists which may mean some cases are dealt with by inexperienced officers. We saw some examples of the impact of this, with poor responses from calls involving children, resulting in them being closed as being resolved without deployment.

The force's recording of ethnicity details remains poor and inconsistent. The force knows about this problem but hasn't addressed it. This represents a missed opportunity on an individual level to understand the child's identity and strategically to collate information which may inform service delivery. The recording of ethnicity is also an area for improvement in social services.

When responding to families at risk from domestic abuse, we saw officers considering issuing offenders with domestic violence prevention notices (DVPN). These orders are a positive act to safeguard vulnerable families. However, the domestic violence disclosure scheme (also known as Clare's Law) is not always fully understood or progressed in a timely manner, meaning that victims and children are not receiving the right information, when necessary.

Children's Services

Improvement is required in recording the strengths and protective factors in children's lives. At the time of the inspection, we did not see the impact of the recently launched recording policy in records we viewed. There is insufficient evidence measuring progress in the care and support protection plans. Some records include genograms and chronologies, but not all chronologies are up to-date. As in CIW's performance evaluation inspection dated May 2022, care must be taken when individual children are part of sibling groups to ensure their individual voice and lived experience is not lost. The quality of practice and recording remains too variable across teams. The local authority is in the early stages of implementing the model of Signs of Safety (SoS). This includes back to basics training to improve the consistency of practice and support practitioners' confidence.

2.2 People

Partnership arrangements

There is a positive approach to learning and development in relation to child protection across agencies. A programme of multi-agency face to face and virtual

training is being progressed across CTMSB footprint in line with recommendations following published child practice reviews.

There is a positive healthy culture of challenge between agencies, at times utilising the CRISP policy to support practitioners in finding a resolution when they have a professional disagreement in relation to safeguarding practice.

Leaders and managers understand the prevalence of need and risk in their area. They have a good understanding of the experiences of children and families who need help and work together to plan strategically for this. A child-centred approach is evident at an operational level particularly when children are in school.

Strengths

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

In paediatric consultations and health visitor records there is evidence of professionals seeking the views of the child. Health services work closely with parents and carers to effect positive change for children. Feedback obtained from children and their families is used to shape services, including in CAMHS and the Safeguarding Hub.

The health board's safeguarding team is a valued resource, offering support, advice, supervision, and training to staff. The team is proactive in ensuring learning from reviews is shared via the development of 7-minute briefings and the revision of training to capture key messages. Further resource would enable the team to expand their services to more staff groups, such as offering formal safeguarding supervision sessions to CAMHS staff and the delivery of more Level 3 safeguarding training sessions to improve mandatory training compliance.

Education

There is strong leadership of safeguarding in schools which is well supported by the Education Engagement Team (EET). The work of the EET is exemplary and is highly valued by school leaders and well-being staff. The Corporate Director of Education and Family Support has a clear and ambitious vision to ensure that schools are safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environments for the children and young people of Bridgend. Together with the head of education and group managers of relevant services, the Corporate Director places a significant focus on the safety and well-being of all pupils. They work together effectively and with determination to fulfil well-considered strategic plans. Leadership and management roles are distributed effectively and sensibly across the service. Leaders at all levels understand their responsibilities in keeping learners safe and are passionate about their work. The Education and Family Directorate considers national priorities accordingly and have identified important areas for development. It has put in place appropriate policies and strategies to support improvement, for example improving attendance, reducing exclusions, and tackling the impact of poverty and deprivation on pupil progress and well-being.

In all cases evidenced during the inspection, schools robustly support children at risk of harm and those who have suffered significant harm and provide beneficial and relevant interventions for them (and often their families). In most cases, schools are fully informed of incidences and developments, but there is too much variability in timeliness of information from PPNs. In a few cases, important developments are not shared directly with schools.

When appropriate, children are included and invited to meetings that affect them. Pupil voice in schools is strong and children say staff involve them in decision making and listen well to their views. The local authority provides linguistic support in meetings for pupils and their families for which English is not their first language and also translate key documentation.

Schools have access to regular and relevant safeguarding training at all levels, delivered by the local authority. This training complies with statutory requirements for training of education staff at all levels on safeguarding and child protection. As part of the learning from a recently published child practice review, schools have had further advice on how to investigate and respond to non-accidental injuries. There are regular and useful other professional learning opportunities organised by the local authority in relevant safeguarding matters. Although school staff are trained to an appropriate level to enable them to fulfil their role in safeguarding children, there is variation in how many school governors undertake safeguarding training.

South Wales Police

The vulnerability of people is a clear focus for the force. At a strategic level, the force has structured governance for vulnerability, which includes child protection. A fortnightly force vulnerability improvement board is chaired by the assistant chief constable (ACC) and is attended by strategic leads from departments across the force. In addition, a structure also exists with partners to review performance and take learning to improve practice.

There is strong visibility at chief officer level. For example, the chief constable has a road show where they and other senior officers discuss topics such as child exploitation, the early help pathway and well-being support. The force also has in place well-being and support avenues available to all staff.

Where police officers are concerned for the welfare of children, they record this on force systems. Specialist staff check these reports and add relevant information before sharing with children's services. We saw timely and frequent supervisory oversight of investigations, which, at times, has included senior managers.

We saw some good examples of officers attending incidents and engaging with the public to make sure they are safeguarded. PPNs show officers capturing the voice of the child. Children are often seen and spoken to, but the force knows that this

remains inconsistent. The quality of the recording of children's lived experience needs to be improved so the response to their needs can be individual and tailored.

Children's Services

Leaders and senior managers in Bridgend maintain a strong focus on improving children's services. The Chief Executive continues to chair the Improving Outcomes for Children Board, which was set up in March 2022. The Board has made a positive impact through enhanced oversight of children's services and early help services, ensuring there is sufficient information about, and scrutiny of, performance.

Practitioners spoke positively about the support offered to each other and the ethos of a team approach. We heard about excellent peer support, informal and formal supervision, and approachable and available managers. Management oversight of files is consistent, but not always sufficiently effective in terms of the recording of challenge and quality control of decision making. This can result in a missed opportunity to improve the variable quality of assessments and plans. Practitioners welcome the reduction in caseload numbers to support improvements in practice in IAA.

Advocacy is being provided to meet the needs of individual children. The local authority reports a steep rise in advocacy referrals compared with 2021/22. There is good overall communication between practitioners and third sector providers. Children we spoke to said they know their social worker and understand that they kept them safe. They all had support from an advocate to express their views and appreciated this support. Where children and families' voices are prominent in plans, it assists to ensure people receive the right support.

Practitioners are generally positive in relation to training, development, and opportunities to share learning in the local authority. It is too soon to assess the impact of Signs of Safety, but it is certainly welcomed by the workforce. Some practitioners in MASH expressed the view that they would benefit from more bespoke training on particular topics to confidently oversee their broad range of work.

We saw evidence of the Active Offer of Welsh language and people's language preference was seen in key documents. Whilst we did not review any records in Welsh, we could see where it was recorded as the preferred language.

What needs to improve

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Governance arrangements need to be strengthened, with clearer oversight and improved quality assurance monitoring. There is no safeguarding strategy in place and the ongoing health board restructuring has led to some uncertainty as to where

scrutiny and oversight should be managed. The health board's safeguarding executive group meetings are well attended by representatives from across departments.

Compliance with level 3 safeguarding training amongst some key staff groups is poor and is a long-standing identified risk. Compounding factors include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the completion of training, some staff groups not having access to the electronic staff record system (ESR), accuracy of recording on the ESR, and a lack of multi-agency training opportunities. There are limited resources within the health board's safeguarding team to develop, coordinate and deliver training. Compliance with violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence training is also low.

The health board has a high percentage of staff who do not have a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) recorded on their ESR. This is a concern and one which needs to be rectified with urgency.

Safeguarding activity is clearly being prioritised by health board staff despite the competing pressures. However, increased demand has impacted service delivery in some areas. This includes compliance with statutory timescales for children looked after (CLA) health assessments, and the timeliness of the response of public protection nurses to staff seeking advice about child protection referrals.

The number of computer recording systems used across the health board hinders the gathering of information staff for strategy meetings and child protection conferences. It also presents a significant risk that some pertinent information may be missed.

South Wales Police

Analysts complete strategic assessments and problem profiles to help the force understand the extent of risk, threat, and harm in its priority areas, such as criminal exploitation. It is unclear whether this approach is used to drive an overall child protection strategy. For example, the force has information about individuals who are exploiting children criminally or sexually, but there is not an understanding of dynamic risk and harm posed to the children. It means the force is not properly assessing the information it holds about children's vulnerability, who they are, or those who are a risk to them.

Compliance with safeguarding training should be improved. The force delivers vulnerability training to staff, although not all the staff in vulnerability-focused roles have completed the accredited training.

The force response to children with missing episodes, particularly care-experienced children, needs to improve. A jointly formulated multi-agency risk management plan would make it more effective and in line with partnership working. We saw some

examples where cases were allocated to patrol officers rather than more experienced specialist investigators.

Children's Services

Whilst the local authority continues to take substantial action to address the challenges of recruitment and retention, this remains a significant pressure. At the time of the inspection, agency staff are depended upon to deliver key statutory functions. A high level of anxiety exists across the permanent workforce about the exit plan for agency workers. We acknowledge recent successes in appointing to managerial posts permanently. However, an unstable workforce inhibits children's ability to form stable, trusting, and significant relationships with a consistent worker. We found both informal and formal supervision takes place frequently across the teams. Staff reported receiving regular and good quality supervision, however, this was not well evidenced in a sample of supervision notes. Supervision lacks critical analysis, reflection and a focus on individual staff's learning and development needs. In recent months, the local authority has launched a new supervision policy, some staff and managers are unaware of this policy which indicates it has not been embedded in teams.

Further strengthening of practitioners' responsibilities to parents, including parents who may be estranged or who may not be actively involved in their child's life, is required. For instance, we saw an example where a father was not invited to core group meetings and had not been sent the minutes of the initial child protection conference. This missed an opportunity to involve and update significant family members. CTMSB has issued a practice reminder in relation to 'professional responsibility to absent parents' which must be routinely followed.

The local authority's ambition to drive forward a range of improvement plans is positive. A challenge is ensuring this is carefully managed with a focus on key priorities to reduce the potential risk of staff feeling overwhelmed. Concise and targeted communication to staff is required to enhance consistency in some key areas. Time is now required to consolidate and digest the messages about practice.

2.3 Partnership and Integration

Partnership Arrangements

There is good support from the Regional Safeguarding Board where relationships are established and consistent. Leaders in the local partnership, through the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA), actively monitor and evaluate the work of statutory partners. They provide partnership-based governance, scrutiny, and assurance about the effectiveness of services. A Joint Operational Group at manager level provides further regular opportunity for constructive challenge and continuous improvement between partners.

Opportunities for partnership working are positively exploited at an operational and strategic level. Professionals in the MASH are co-located, helping promote

partnership working. MASH team managers meet regularly to highlight any issues or share good practice. We noted good representation from key partners at strategy discussions/ meetings and case conferences. Forty-five practitioners responded to CIW's anonymous survey with most rating partnership working as excellent or good (60%) with 38% recording this as adequate.

There has been investment in a regional information sharing system – referred to as GOSS (Ground Operational Support Services) for use by partner agencies. There has been consultation with key stakeholders as part of development of this work, which is intended to enhance multi-agency communication.

As noted in CIW's recent inspection activity, there is continued oversight of performance across different levels of the local authority. Quality assurance by both an external provider and children's services provides an accurate picture of the quality of practice, both by using compliance information and children's experiences. These messages are shared with partners for consideration.

Ensuring a joint understanding of the threshold for significant harm is an area which requires strengthening. Positive steps are being taken to address the consistency of decision-making including awareness raising by social services managers in schools. We understand a joint training programme is being progressed along with a threshold policy. There is a need for professionals working together to have a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibility. This is particularly the case where new legislation impacts on child protection practice such as the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020.

Strengths

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

In many of the records it is evident that health staff, including GPs, generally communicate well and work productively with multi-agency partners. GPs know which children are being looked after by the local authority or named on the child protection register. There is evidence of good multi agency working and communication along with attendance at safeguarding meetings being prioritised by health visitors. Engagement in safeguarding meetings is consistently good.

Healthcare staff are confident in challenging partners and escalation processes are in use. They can escalate through the corporate safeguarding team if needed. A multi-agency case discussion forum is in place, providing a safe space for partners to discuss and professionally challenge cases where differences arise.

Paediatricians have developed bespoke training for partner agencies on roles and responsibilities when a child requires a child protection medical to ensure partners are aware of the correct pathways and process.

Education

There are strong working practices between schools/PRU and other agencies such as health and children's services who work effectively in partnership to plan, implement and review provision for vulnerable children in Bridgend. This is supported through Team Around the School (TAS) meetings and close working with the Education Engagement Team, MASH, and the area 'early help' hubs.

The local authority requires all schools to submit an annual safeguarding audit which is then scrutinised by the local authority's Education Engagement Team (EET). The EET provides strong challenge to schools through this process. Overall, these audits are comprehensive, purposeful and enable schools to identify clear strengths and areas for development. EET link workers conduct termly visits to all schools to review progress and this helps maintain, a strong focus on improvement.

Schools attend and contribute fully to child protection conferences and reviews. Data on the child's attendance, punctuality and attainment are shared in school reports. Schools know children well and often offer additional support through breakfast club provision, establishing a trusted adult for children to have access to and facilitating rooms for social worker visits. There is good evidence of schools working supportively with parents whilst remaining totally focused on the child's well-being. Parents' contact with schools provides useful intelligence that supports the care and support planning.

The local authority has robust and timely processes to manage any professional concerns under Section 5 of WSP.

South Wales Police

There are many examples of positive partnership working including pro-actively sharing information and contributing to decision-making forums. Repeat strategy meetings are held when new information comes to light, supported with good record keeping including clear actions.

In some cases, officers attending incidents engage well with people to ensure they are safeguarded. In these cases, decision-making includes obtaining the views of people involved to ensure situations can be managed safely.

Partners work well together to initiate and progress child protection procedures to ensure the child is safe from harm and abuse. Information reports for case conferences were thorough and shared with all agencies. They were also easily available on police systems.

Children's Services

As in previous CIW inspections, opportunities to work in partnership across agencies are positively taken up. Case recordings and interviews demonstrate excellent working relationships between families and professionals. We saw a particularly

positive example of school assisting a mother with budgeting and advice around healthy eating.

Despite hearing about the negative impact of frequent social work changes on working in partnership with children, we also heard from parents about the positive impact when it works well. One parent told us *'my child's social worker now is amazing. He keeps me in touch and informed really gets on well with * and * really likes him. I just hope he will stay'*.

We found in general effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver good quality support to children and families in Bridgend. For example, the local authority has invested in the third sector to develop and grow family group meetings. Positive examples were shared of the good outcomes of this work. Third sector partners are clear and confident in their roles. They make a significant contribution to building resilience within families and supporting people's well-being. Some third sector partners are not time limited when undertaking work with children, and families appreciate the flexibility this affords.

What needs to improve

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

It is not clear that there is a smooth pathway for the transition of care between health services, for example midwife to health visitor, or health visitor to school nurse, in the files seen. There was also no evidence of care and support protection plans being revisited or actions updated as part of the health professional's contact.

Despite some good examples of joint visits between health and social services and good communication supporting practice, attendance at key child protection meetings could be improved. Contribution to core group meetings and review child protection conferences for school aged children could also be improved. This represents a missed opportunity to be involved in multi-agency child protection arrangements.

From a health survey undertaken as part of this review, of 71 respondents across CTMUHB, 60% said that IT systems did not support the effective communication/information sharing regarding safeguarding. Some 50% of respondents said information sharing between relevant agencies regarding child safeguarding is not effective.

As previously mentioned, safeguarding training compliance is varied across the health board, with poor compliance in some areas. This is acknowledged by the health board as an area for improvement. There is confusion regarding thresholds and further work and training around thresholds and professional curiosity is required.

South Wales Police

As mentioned earlier in the report, there are occasions when PPNs are not shared in a timely manner with schools. This means some children may not receive support quickly enough.

Despite some positive examples of engaging with children in the records reviewed, we also saw some language of frustration between the force and partners, highlighting disagreements as to which agency is responsible for safeguarding a child. These tensions indicate that agencies are not always working together effectively. Attitude and activity are not always child focused.

Children's Services

Records of child protection meetings such as conferences and core group minutes are not consistently shared with key partners. This means agencies may not receive key information to enable them to safeguard and support children and families.

Gaps in children's records mean that it is challenging to obtain an accurate understanding of children's circumstances. Management oversight is good at the front door but weakened when it moves to the safeguarding hubs where in the recent past social work practice has been adversely impacted by staff turnover and high caseloads.

There is evidence of reviews occurring but limited evidence of how children are involved in reviews of their care and support plan. Only a relatively small number of children and young people attend their meeting and the reasons for this need to be understood by the local authority. We saw an example where the child was recorded as too young when they were of sufficient age to participate.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) have a critical role in overseeing the quality of practice and provide a valuable contribution in challenging delays where necessary. Due to their current volume of work, they cannot always prioritise visits to children prior to CLA reviews. They consult parents in all cases prior to initial and review conferences. The local authority must ensure children consistently have their views sought, and they are provided with opportunities to participate in decisions which affect them.

Some plans are adult rather than child focused with a lack of measurable outcomes. These plans are written in generic language with limited specific detail of what needs to change and how progress is monitored. Broad statements make it challenging to evidence progress against identified needs and risks. Core groups should have a greater focus on progress against the child protection plan. Discussions with practitioners also highlighted there is variance across teams in understanding which records are shared with children and families as part of the child protection processes.

2.4 Prevention

Partnership Arrangements

In the current context of increased demand, it is a challenge to prioritise the preventative agenda in a way which reduces the need for more formal care and support. It is positive the local authority has commissioned an independent review of children's services to evaluate its operating models. Early help and edge of care services are included in this review to maximise the use of all available resources to prevent escalation of need.

Early help is co-located in the locality safeguarding teams with a representative also based in MASH. A wide range of early help and preventative support is being provided to children and families including the Comets and Rockets programme for children, IDVA, ELSA support via school and many programmes providing parenting support. There has been a recent focus on reducing referral pathways and improving information sharing.

Despite a range of preventative services, we heard mixed accounts about their effectiveness. These were reflected in our anonymous social services staff survey with one respondent commenting 'early help is a good source of support, and the staff have a good knowledge base'. Social services staff told us waiting lists can delay support for families beginning but also prevent families stepping down to lower levels of support. Schools provided a more positive account of early help services.

Practitioners from different agencies reflected the view that arrangements for stepping up and stepping down support to children and families could be clearer and more streamlined. Whilst we were informed there is a clear written transfer protocol in place, which includes joint visits, it appears not all staff are aware of this protocol. There should be a clear and consistent approach to accessing assessments and preventative services to improve outcomes for children.

For some children who have experienced long-term neglect, planning can be ineffective across agencies, with insufficient focus on the impact of interventions and what is changing for children. Recordings are descriptive and do not evidence what progress is made, or why improvements have not been made. We saw examples where children may have benefitted from earlier intervention to avoid an escalation of need.

Strengths

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

During the inspection health staff informed us they welcome the introduction of the Signs of Safety approach and there were positive examples of referrals to preventative services. We saw holistic health assessments in children looked after

records which identified emotional and physical health needs as well as wishes and feelings.

Education

The local authority has consolidated its wide range of support services available to schools and vulnerable families into a purposeful, well-managed and integrated 'Early Help' provision. Early help consists of a team of professionals distributed equally across three hubs covering the whole of the local authority who support the work of schools and children's services. Overall, schools say the Early Help Hub system works very well, and staff provide a high level of support for individual families. They also run bespoke sessions in schools for common concerns, for example dealing with behavioural issues.

Primary schools and the special school offer a wide range of preventative activities and interventions to pupils, including lessons on healthy relationships and staying safe online as well as running anti-bullying campaigns. However, the provision for relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is variable across schools, which reflects the current national picture. The youth service and other services such as youth justice and the communications and relationships (CART) service provide beneficial support to schools and individual pupils. They deliver assemblies and share resources with schools with a clear focus on preventative and proactive strategies to boost pupil engagement and reduce the risk of offending.

Children's Services

Children's services do not have waiting lists across teams and despite the context of increasing volume and complexity, staff express positivity about improvements made by the authority over the last eighteen months. This commitment to improve systems, processes and practice is an area of strength in BCBC. As in CIW's previous improvement check the local authority continues to respond effectively to meet the needs of children, especially where acute need and risk is identified. We saw examples where safe care arrangements are discussed and implemented with parents while further enquiries are underway.

Despite the demands on the service performance indicators in relation to statutory duties such as timely child protection conferences and visits are generally good. There is still room for improvement so the local authority must maintain focus and scrutiny on ensuring compliance with all statutory responsibilities.

What needs to improve

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Some home monitoring visits by health staff do not capture progress against the child's CASPP. Timescales are often vague, for example recorded as 'asap' or 'ongoing'. In some cases, there could have been an improvement in the engagement of school nurses, as at times it was unclear what involvement they had.

South Wales Police

There are examples of good service delivery by the force at the point of attending incidents with a focus on safeguarding, as well as within the MASH. However, the force response to missing children has some gaps. Risk assessments do not fully reflect the circumstances of the information provided, meaning some children are left at risk for longer periods when they should not be.

There is inconsistent awareness and understanding of Operation Encompass, the process, and its purpose. Useful information is not being shared with schools so vulnerability in children is not identified in their education setting.

Children's Services

We heard there can be uncertainty around the progress of referrals to the early help service and limited opportunities for transition from one team to another.

Practitioners are not always aware of when support will commence which can result in re-referrals. Children's early help and preventative assessments identify needs well, but subsequent plans are not always informed by sufficient or clear management direction. A prudent approach to resource allocation is required to ensure the right help is available at the right time.

Next Steps

On behalf of the partnership, the local authority should prepare a written statement of proposed action responding to the findings outlined in this report. This should be a multi-agency response involving Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and South Wales Police. The response should set out the actions for the partnership and, where appropriate, individual agencies. The head of service for children's services should send the written statement of action to CIWLocalAuthority@gov.wales by (date to be confirmed as will be 6 weeks after report publication). This statement will inform the lines of enquiry at any future joint or single agency activity by the inspectorates.

Methodology

Fieldwork

Most inspection evidence was gathered by reviewing the experiences of people through sampling agency records and file tracking children's care and support arrangements. We case sampled ten files and tracked six.

Tracking a child's record includes having conversations with the child where appropriate, their family or carers, key worker, the key worker's manager, and other professionals involved.

We held focus groups with staff and two professional groups focused on the working arrangements and outcomes for two of the tracked files.

We visited a small sample of primary schools and the special school where we conducted meetings with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead and small groups of children.

We interviewed a range of employees across different agencies.

We interviewed a range of partner organisations, representing both statutory and third sector.

We reviewed supporting documentation sent to the inspectorates for the purpose of the inspection.

We administered surveys to children's services staff, third sector organisations and children and family members.

We observed child protection conferences and practice as part of our inspection activity.

We conducted a pre-inspection headteacher survey and visited a small sample of primary schools during the inspection week.

We evaluated samples of health and well-being schemes of work and looked at samples of pupils' work. This included holding a 'listening to learner' sessions in all schools visited.

Acknowledgements

The inspectorates would like to thank the people, staff, and partners who gave their time and contributed to this inspection.



Bridgend County Borough Council, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board & South Wales Police Joint Inspection Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) Action Plan

September 2023

| ALL PARTNER AGENCIES | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|--|---|
| WELLBEING | | | | |
| FINDINGS: Information sharing challenges within MASH, including connectivity issues for partner agencies. | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| To implement the GOSS system to ensure an appropriate information sharing | October 2023 | MASH Co-ordinator/MASH partner agencies | Appropriate and timely information sharing | October 23 - GOSS system went live in Bridgend 03.10.23 with all partner agencies using the system. Work is still underway on |

| <p>platform for multi-agencies.</p> <p>To review whether the premises in which the MASH is located is fit for purpose</p> | | | | <p>developing the Teams Channel to compliment the GOSS system, which will give agencies access to the minutes straight away (currently business support circulate minutes to partners).</p> <p>October 23 - An options appraisal is currently underway, looking at potential locations for MASH.</p> |
|--|----------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| <p>FINDINGS: Resources in MASH to meet increase in demand, volume of referrals, screening and strategy meetings. This includes complexities around children services recruitment and retention.</p> | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| <p>Increase the resource available within the MASH to respond to referrals</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>South Wales Police</p> | <p>To ensure there is the right resource within agencies to respond to the significant increase demand ensuring children and families</p> | <p>October 23 - Recruitment Process in advanced stage</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| <p>Review of safeguarding resources across CTMUHB to meet the safeguarding responsibilities across its services within CTMUHB.</p> <p>To review current structures within the MASH/IAA and locality hubs and explore options for recruitment and retention</p> | <p>April 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p> | <p>Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board</p> <p>Bridgend Children's Social Care</p> | <p>are protected from harm</p> | <p>October 23 - Work has commenced in reviewing current structures in MASH/IAA and locality hubs. It is intended that the proposals for these structures will lead to a consultation with staff in January 2024.</p> |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|

| FINDINGS: Consistent management of suspected non-accidental injuries within and outside of working hours. | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|--|-----------------|
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| <p>Multi-agency training and the development of a regional multi-agency policy for the management of suspicious and unexplained injuries in children (PPG)</p> <p>Consider annual audits to ensure correct processes (CQAP or MQAP) and pathways are followed and evidence of professional curiosity.</p> <p>Continue to re convene any strategy meetings held outside of working hours and following</p> | Ongoing | <p>All agencies</p> <p>CQAP/MQAP Groups</p> | To ensure that there are robust processes in place that protect children from harm | |

| working day to ensure a multiagency approach. | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|--|---|
| FINDINGS: Recording and documenting of ethnicity within records, strengths and protective factors within children's lives. | | | | |
| Detailed genograms and chronologies | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| To embed the signs of safety framework across teams ensuring strengths, risks and needs are captured clearly. Genograms and chronologies will be undertaken within this framework | July 2024 | Bridgend Children's Social Care | To provide staff with a clear understanding of the family, the work that has been undertaken to date and progress being made in reducing risk of harm. | October 23 - The Signs of Safety framework commenced roll out in Bridgend's Children's Social Care in January 2023. All teams have received the initial 2-day training and the consolidating 5-day training has commenced. There is evidence of this model beginning to implemented in practice as noted within the JICPA report. Ongoing work is required to |
| Relevant SWP & CTMUHB to attend multi-agency training on Signs of Safety framework | July 2024 | South Wales Police Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | | |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| | | | | <p>ensure this embedded consistently across all teams and partner agencies.</p> <p>October 23 - Partner agencies have attended Signs of Safety briefings hosted by BCBC. Staff have been invited to attend a two day training course in November 2023, with future training opportunities planned.</p> |
| <p>FINDINGS: Voice of the child/children. Including, ensuring that within sibling groups each individual child's voice is heard.</p> <p>Children and young people should be involved in reviews of their care and support plan and their views consistently sought.</p> | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--|--|--|
| <p>To Implement the Signs of Safety framework which includes direct work with children as part of the care planning approach</p> | <p>July 2024</p> | <p>Bridgend Children's Social Care</p> | <p>To ensure that the lived experience of a child is heard clearly within care planning for them and their families.</p> | <p>The Signs of Safety framework commenced roll out in Bridgend's Children's Social Care in January 2023. All teams have received the initial 2-day training and the consolidating 5-day training has commenced. There is evidence of this model beginning to implemented in practice as noted within the JICPA report. Ongoing work is required to ensure this embedded consistently across all teams and partner agencies.</p> |
| <p>CTMUHB – Review of current practice across all services, including conference reports to ensure voice of child evident.</p> | <p>October 2023</p> | <p>Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB</p> | | <p>October 23 - A new case conference report has been developed to capture the day in the life of the child, views, wishes and feelings of the child and family.</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Development of PREMS/PROMS for children and young people across services. Reflecting the Health Boards Children's Charter.</p> | | | | <p>This report template is currently being piloted by two services with a planned role out across the health board in December 2023.</p> <p>October 23 - Patient feedback questionnaires have been revised to ensure the voice of the child is captured through safeguarding processes undertaken at the CP medical hub and on the wards.</p> |
|---|--|--|--|---|

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|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| <p>PEOPLE</p> | | | | |
| <p>FINDINGS: A jointly formulated multi-agency risk management plan for children with missing episodes.</p> | | | | |
| <p>ACTION</p> | <p>TIMESCALE</p> | <p>RESPONSIBLE</p> | <p>INTENDED OUTCOME</p> | <p>PROGRESS</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|------------|--------------|---|--|
| To convene a task and finish group to explore multi agency approach to children who go missing | March 2024 | All agencies | To ensure that there is a clear, joined approach between services when a child goes missing with the intention to reduce risk of harm | |
|--|------------|--------------|---|--|

PARTNERSHIPS AND INTEGRATION

FINDINGS: The quality of care and support protection plans (CASPP) are too variable. Plans are adult, rather than child focussed.

| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| BCBC – Signs of Safety framework to be embedded into practice. A review of the approach to working with children and families open on a care and support basis to be undertaken to develop a more focussed approach to implementing change. | July 2024 | Bridgend Children’s Social Care | To ensure that children access support that meets their needs from the right service at the right time | October 23 - The Signs of Safety framework commenced roll out in Bridgend’s Children’s Social Care in January 2023. All teams have received the initial 2-day training and the consolidating 5-day training has commenced. There is evidence of this model beginning to |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Partner agencies to utilise the Signs of</p> | | <p>South Wales Police</p> | | <p>implemented in practice as noted within the JICPA report. Ongoing work is required to ensure this embedded consistently across all teams and partner agencies.</p> <p>A review of social care approach to CASP cases has been undertaken with an approach being implemented to improve oversight, consistency of support and regular reviews. This will include elements of the SofS framework in particular family network meetings.</p> <p>October 23 - Partner agencies have attended</p> |
|---|--|---------------------------|--|---|

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|---|--|-----------------------|--|---|
| Safety training and briefings available, to understand the framework. | | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | | Signs of Safety briefings hosted by BCBC. Staff have been invited to attend a two day training course in November 2023. |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|---|

| BCBC CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| WELLBEING | | | | |
| FINDINGS: The importance of effective supervision across services, that is evaluated and effectively documented. Supervision needs to ensure critical analysis, reflection and focus on the individual staffs learning and development needs | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| The supervision policy to be re-launched and accessible to all managers on the intranet. An audit to be undertaken to review use and effectiveness | November 2024 | Bridgend Children's Social Care | To ensure staff are receiving regular and consistent supervision that assists their understanding of their role and responsibilities. | |

| FINDINGS: Strengthening practitioner's responsibilities to parents, including parents who may be estranged. | | | | |
|---|------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| Signs of Safety framework to be embedded which will consider whole family networks within the process. Further training to be offered to staff as identified within Child T Practice Review | July 2024 | Bridgend Children's Social Care | To ensure whole families are considered and supported when becoming involved with statutory services at the 1 st point of contact | October 23 - The Signs of Safety framework commenced roll out in Bridgend's Children's Social Care in January 2023. All teams have received the initial 2-day training and the consolidating 5-day training has commenced. There is evidence of this model beginning to implemented in practice as noted within the JICPA report. Ongoing work is required to ensure this embedded |

| | | | | consistently across all teams and partner agencies. |
|---|------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| PARTNERSHIPS AND INTEGRATION | | | | |
| FINDINGS: Records of meetings such as strategy meetings, child protection conferences and core group minutes are not consistently shared with key partners. | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| To review the role of Business Support and ensure there is clarity on responsibilities and resourced effectively. Audit to be undertaken of minute distribution. | July 2024 | Bridgend Children's Social Care | To ensure information is shared with families and agencies in a timely way to support care planning. | |
| PREVENTION | | | | |
| FINDINGS: Progress of referrals to early help service and limited opportunities for transition from one team to another. | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| IPC to review Early Help services and models to ensure they are fit for purpose and ensure families access the right support at the right time | July 2024 | Bridgend Children's Social Care | To reduce delay in children and families accessing support from the right service at the right time. | October 23 - IPC have conducted a review of pathways for families into early help. Their recommendations are being considered between social care and Education and Family Support. This will be further reviewed in January 2024. |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------|--|--|

BCBC EDUCATION and Family Support

WELLBEING

FINDINGS: Distribution of support services across schools

| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
|--|-----------|------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Recruitment of additional Education Welfare Officer's Recruitment of peripatetic attendance | ASAP | Group Manager Family Support | Additional 3 Education welfare officer | Completed |


| | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>and wellbeing workers to support the education welfare officers by with regard to those clusters presenting with the lowest attendance.</p> | <p>ASAP</p> | <p>Group Manager Family Support</p> | <p>Recruitment of 6 attendance and wellbeing officers</p> | <p>Completed</p> |
| <p>Establish an attendance Task and Finish Group</p> | <p>ASAP</p> | <p>Group Manager Family Support</p> | <p>The attendance task and finish group to be well established and well attended by local authority officers and schools.</p> | <p>In progress and well established</p> |
| <p>Attendance leads forum to take place</p> | <p>ASAP</p> | <p>Group Manager Family Support</p> | <p>Attendance leads forum to take place and highlight collaboration between the local authority and schools.</p> | <p>Completed</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Local authority attendance initiative to take place | 18 September 2023 | Group Manager Family Support | Local authority officers to consistently report the importance of good school attendance – report on the number of N codes. | Completed |
| PARTNERSHIPS AND INTEGRATION | | | | |
| FINDINGS: The provision for relationships and sexuality education (RSE) | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| <p>To deliver professional learning about RSE a consistent approach to the teaching of RSE across the local authority</p> | <p>Autumn term 2023</p> | <p>Central South Consortium (Via Group Manager, School Support)</p> | <p>Provision of a consistent approach to the teaching of RSE across the local authority</p> | <p>October 23 - Good progress has been made.</p> <p>Central South Consortium colleague has delivered training to all headteachers in Bridgend and a briefing to all elected members (many of whom are school governors).</p> <p>He is currently working with school clusters to develop a cluster-wide approach to RSE.</p> |
| <p>PREVENTION</p> | | | | |
| <p>FINDINGS: Timely sharing of PPNs with schools.</p> <p>Improved awareness and understanding of Operation Encompass, the process, and its purpose.</p> | | | | |

| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
|--|--------------|-------------|--|--|
| Review PPN screening process with Children's Services and Police to ensure information is shared and support offered in a timely manner. | January 2024 | Gail Biggs | Consistent process for the sharing information with agencies and schools. Resulting in early decisions on appropriate support offered to families. | October 23 - SWP are reviewing this model to determine how effectively this approach is working and can be improved. |

| CWM TAF MORGANNWG UHB | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|---|----------|
| PEOPLE | | | | |
| FINDINGS: Governance arrangements need to be strengthened, with clearer oversight and improved quality assurance monitoring. | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| Development of a Safeguarding strategy. Work in collaboration with Care Groups to oversee and scrutinise Action/Improvement | December 2023 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | CTMUHB to demonstrate its plans and priorities to safeguard children and adults accessing | |

| plans for safeguarding activity within CTMUHB. | | | services within the organisation. | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| FINDINGS: CTMUHB have a high percentage of staff who do not have a Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS) | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| CTMUHB safeguarding will review the risk register with workforce to ensure there is a robust plan to address the current risks. | October 2023 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | To ensure all health board employees have a current DBS. | October 23 – The Deputy Director of Nursing has met with workforce to review the risk and ensure a robust plan to deliver on this action. |
| FINDINGS: Compliance with safeguarding training. With a focus for CTMUHB on professional curiosity and thresholding. | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| To target bespoke training to key areas of the health board working with children to ensure compliance above 85%. | April 2024 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | To increase level 3 training compliance above 85% in all areas who care for children. | October 23 - A training strategy has been developed and approved.  CTMUHB%20Trainin g%20Strategy%20(Fi |

| To explore opportunities for the provision of a Practice Educator for Safeguarding. This will ensure a dedicated resource for the development, delivery, and oversight of safeguarding training within CTMUHB. | | | | October 2023 – Bespoke training is being delivered monthly to midwifery services and neonates to increase compliance. |
|---|------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| <p>FINDINGS: The importance of effective supervision across services, that is evaluated and effectively documented.</p> <p>Supervision needs to ensure critical analysis, reflection and focus on the individual staffs learning and development needs</p> | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| <p>CTMUHB need to review supervision models to ensure all staff receive appropriate safeguarding supervision.</p> <p>Audits of supervision to ensure analysis,</p> | March 2024 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | To ensure practitioners receive quality supervision that is analytical, reflective and considers wellbeing. | October 2023 – A T&F group has been developed and current policy reviewed. The All-Wales policy is currently under review and work ongoing in the National Safeguarding service. This work will feed into the review. |

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| reflection and focus on individuals needs. | | | | Audits of safeguarding supervision have been included in the audit plan for children and young people services. |
|--|--|--|--|---|

PARTNERSHIP AND INTEGRATION

FINDINGS: A robust pathway for the transition of care between health services.

| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
|--|------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| Review of current transition pathways to ensure needs of child and family met through changes in services. | March 2024 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | To ensure the needs of children and young people are communicated between services, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns. | October 23 - Review of current transition pathways to ensure needs of child and family met through changes in services. |

FINDINGS: Appropriate representation from health to attend core groups and conferences for school aged children

| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
|--------|-----------|-------------|------------------|----------|
|--------|-----------|-------------|------------------|----------|

| <p>CTMUHB to develop a standard operating procedure for school nursing services.</p> <p>Health and children services to develop a pathway, ensuring the correct health representative is identified through assessments and invited to conferences.</p> | March 2024 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | Agencies to ensure the correct health representative is informed of safeguarding concerns and given the opportunity to participate in conferences and core groups. | |
|---|--------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| PREVENTION | | | | |
| FINDINGS: Home monitoring visits should capture progress against the child/children's CASPP. | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| <p>Ensure health colleagues are aware of the importance of multi-agency development of CASPP through workshops and training.</p> <p>Documentation audits to include CASPP present in records and reference made to</p> | January 2024 | Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB | To Ensure CTMUHB documentation reflects distance travelled against CASPP and families motivation to change | October 23 – The new case conference report prompts practitioners to consider distance travelled and motivation to change. Workshops have commenced within Health visiting and school nursing. |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| progress during home visits and core groups. | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| SOUTH WALES POLICE | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| PEOPLE | | | | |
| FINDINGS: Compliance with safeguarding training | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |
| Understand training needs of Safeguarding Staff and deliver associated training programme | July 2024 | SWP | Ensure appropriate staff are identified, available and deployed with the suitable accreditation | |
| FINDINGS: Exploitation risk assessment. (p15) | | | | |
| ACTION | TIMESCALE | RESPONSIBLE | INTENDED OUTCOME | PROGRESS |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----|---|--|
| Ensure all exploitation cases have appropriate risk assessment and associated 4 Point Plan | July 2024 | SWP | Shared understanding of risk, and associated multi-agency problem solving plans | |
|--|-----------|-----|---|--|

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|--|---|
| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL POLICY |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING |
| Responsible Officer: | JOE BOYLE POLICY OFFICER |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules |
| Executive Summary: | This report summarises the process and reasons for this policy to be devised and implemented. This policy is the overarching policy position regarding Infection, Prevention and Control for all regulated care services provided by Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate. An Infection, Prevention and Control policy was required to be created following the issuing of Priority Action Notices from recent Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspections of regulated services. This policy has been written in line with the National Infection Control Manual. |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of the development of the proposed Infection, Prevention and Control policy for Regulated Direct Care Services and seek approval to implement the policy across regulated care services provided by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under Regulation 56 of the Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2016, regulated care services are required to have a policy in place, reflective of current national legislation and guidance, to control and minimise the spread of infection and ensure that the service is delivered in line with the contents of said policy.
- 2.2 Following recent inspections carried out by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Priority Action Notices were issued in respect of the development and review of several policies, one of which being in relation to the development of a policy towards Infection, Prevention and Control.
- 2.3 All services currently follow the Infection Prevention and Control procedure.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The proposed Infection, Prevention and Control Policy (attached as **Appendix 1**) has been created to cover and support all regulated care services provided by BCBC Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate, in both Adults and Children's Services.
- 3.2 As a part of this process, service managers liaised with the policy officer to gain input into the current use of restrictive practices within their services. All service-specific procedures were consulted.
- 3.3 The National Infection Control Manual was reviewed and content of the policy was drafted up.
- 3.4 Additional feedback received from the service managers relating to the draft of the policy was incorporated into the proposed policy.
- 3.5 The proposed policy has been submitted to the Directorate's Senior Management Team for review and approval, along with submission to the Trade Unions.
- 3.6 The policy and its associated national framework provides services and staff with a safe and effective framework from which services can operate towards controlling and preventing the spread of any communicable diseases that services may encounter.
- 3.7 Training is ongoing for all staff with initial training being provided to new staff and annual refresher training being provided to established staff.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report.

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| Involvement | Representatives from varying levels of the Directorate, along with colleagues from Commissioning, Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP), Health and Safety, the Shared Regulatory Services, and Finance have fed into this report. |
| Long term | There will be a positive long-term impact of this policy due to meeting regulatory requirements as well as providing a safe and effective framework for Infection, Prevention and Control. |
| Prevention | To prevent the spread of communicable diseases within regulated care settings by the use of appropriate infection prevention and control techniques. |
| Integration | This policy will be implemented and used Directorate wide. Training for is provided to all direct care and support services staff. |
| Collaboration | Work has taken place with commissioning, SCWDP, Service managers, Team managers, Health and Safety and the Shared Regulatory Service. |

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 This policy sets out to provide additional support to all individuals in receipt of direct care and support services provided by the Directorate by providing staff with a clear framework for the prevention of the spread of infection and control of infections. This will safeguard the individuals in receipt of care and support and staff where possible from the spread of communicable diseases.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no additional financial resource implications required from the implementation of this policy. Training in Adults and Children's services remains ongoing and from within existing budgets.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Infection, Prevention and Control Policy for implementation across regulated care services provided by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate.

Background Documents

Social Services and Wellbeing Infection Control Protocol (2022)

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Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate

Infection Prevention and Control Policy

| Updates, Revisions and Amendments | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Version | Details of Change | Date |
| 1 | Creation of policy | November 2023 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy aims to provide a clear and comprehensive summary of Bridgend County Borough Council's Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate's approach to Infection Prevention and Control.
- 1.2 This policy is to be read alongside the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate's Infection Control Protocol (December 2022) found on the Social Services and Wellbeing policy and procedure intranet page.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) will comply with all relevant legislation and associated guidance including but not limited to:
 - Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
 - Children Act 2004
 - Children and Families Act 2014
 - Registration and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
 - The Regulated Services (Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2017
 - The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017
 - Statutory Guidance for service providers and Responsible Individuals on meeting service standard regulations for Care home services, domiciliary support services, secure accommodation services, and residential family centre services
 - National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (Public Health Wales)
 - Medicines Act 1968
 - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
 - The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - The Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections and Related Guidance
 - Personal Protective Equipment at Work (Amendment) Regulations 2022
 - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

3. Definitions

Infection - The invasion and growth of germs in the body. The germs may be bacteria, viruses, yeast, fungi, or other microorganisms. Infections can begin anywhere in the body and may spread all through it.

Host - A host in the context of infectious disease refers to an animal or plant that acts as a biological refuge in which another - often parasitic - organism may dwell.

Virus - a very simple microorganism that infects cells and may cause disease.

Bacteria / Bacterium - A large group of single-cell microorganisms. Some cause infections and disease in animals and humans

Fungus - organisms of the kingdom Fungi, which includes the yeasts, rusts, smuts, mildews, moulds, and mushrooms.

Prevention - the action of stopping something from happening or arising.

Control - Preventing or stopping the spread of infections in social care settings.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Personal protective equipment is protective clothing, helmets, goggles, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer's body from injury or infection. In social care settings this may take the form of gloves, aprons, facemasks, visors or other approved and relevant PPE.

Hygiene - conditions or practices conducive to maintaining health and preventing disease, especially through cleanliness.

Reservoir - The reservoir of an infectious agent is the habitat in which the agent normally lives, grows, and multiplies. Reservoirs include humans, animals, and the environment. The reservoir may or may not be the source from which an agent is transferred to a host.

Portal of entry - The portal of entry refers to the way a pathogen enters a susceptible host.

Transmission - transmission is the passing of a pathogen causing communicable disease from an infected host individual or group to a particular individual or group, regardless of whether the other individual was previously infected.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate is committed to following Public Health Wales stance towards the prevention and control of infections in regulated care settings.

- 4.2 Infection Control and Prevention are a key priority in regulated services provided by Bridgend County Borough Council.
- 4.3 It is the responsibility of all members of staff working in regulated services to ensure they follow this policy and the associated Infection Control and Prevention Protocols to minimise the risks of transmission amongst the people we support, social care staff and any visitors to the regulated setting.
- 4.4 Following Public Health Wales link with NHS Scotland to utilise the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM), this policy and associated procedure has been written in line with current guidelines informed by the NIPCM to be implemented across regulated care settings. Protocols will be revised and be kept in line with any national or regional changes regarding the NIPCM and any changes in legislation.

4.5 **Roles and Responsibilities**

4.5.1 Director of Social Services, **Heads of Services and Responsible Individuals**

Are responsible for:

- Having management systems in place to ensure safe practice (implementation of organisational policies and procedures)
- Complying with relevant legislation and codes of practice (lead employee with responsibility and accountability)
- Creating, maintaining and reviewing safe working practices
- Informing employees of any changes to working practices
- Providing and ensuring provision of adequate PPE and facilities

4.5.2 **Registered Managers**

Are responsible for:

- Carrying out risk assessments to prevent, detect and control the spread of infection. Corporate training in Governance Audit and Risk Management training is available through the Learning and Development website.
- Taking appropriate and proportionate action to identified risk, such as providing personal protective equipment. However, under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) hierarchy of control principles, the provision of PPE should be regarded as the last control option since it only protects the individual wearing the PPE.
- Providing relevant information (policies and procedures) and training to all staff who directly or indirectly provide care
- Keeping relevant records of infections
- Reporting significant outbreaks of infectious diseases under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) alongside the Corporate Health and Safety Unit (CHSU) as set out in section

4.5.4. Please note, occupational diseases reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under RIDDOR are very limited in scope and normally excludes communicable diseases e.g., staff developing COVID-19. COVID-19 was only RIDDOR reportable when the employer knew or had good reasons to believe that the supported individual/staff member had COVID-19, and the employer had not taken reasonable precautions to protect the people they support/their staff by not providing PPE etc. Outbreaks of communicable diseases may be reportable to Public Health Wales and/or Environmental Health but that would be totally independent of HSE requirements. Further details of reporting requirements can be found at section 15.

4.5.3 **Social Care Workers (including agency and bank staff)**

Are responsible for:

- Complying with all legislation, organisational policies and procedures to promote safety (to individual, self and others, e.g. visitors).
- Following risk assessments and care plans when delivering individual care.
- Following the 'fitness to work' procedures by advising their Registered Manager of any symptoms or illnesses they are experiencing or in their household. If they are experiencing symptoms of infectious diseases, staff will remain off work until they are 48 hours symptom free, or until microbiological clearance has been confirmed.
- Taking precautionary measures to prevent cross-infection (hand washing, using personal protective equipment correctly and appropriately, e.g. aprons, gloves).
- Promptly report and record any concerns to their manager or supervisor.
- Attending all training provided to ensure best practice.

4.5.4 **Corporate Health and Safety Unit**

Are responsible for:

- Supporting the Directorate and individuals to help ensure that health and safety related requirements of this policy are competently undertaken.
- Where required, undertaking monitoring and evaluation of services to ensure compliance with and the suitability of procedures associated with this policy. Typical areas of support would be (but not limited to):
 - Training – risk assessment, safety awareness (understanding legal responsibilities and managerial systems for example), COSHH and accident investigation.
 - Risk assessment – direct support in compilation of assessments and associated working practices where required.

- Monitoring and evaluation – risk assessments/working practices, procedures and recording keeping, incident investigations where required.
- RIDDOR – acting as the designated person within the Council CHSU to report all relatable incidents to the HSE and assist the Directorate to ensure that suitable investigations and subsequent modifications are undertaken.

5. Scope

- 5.1 This policy applies to all staff working in or alongside regulated services including those working in adults' services, children's services and any agency workers that may be called upon to support these services.
- 5.2 This policy covers all areas of Infection Prevention and Control processes that take place in regulated services.
- 5.3 This policy is written to go alongside other Directorate and Council policies and procedures and the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate's Infection Control Protocol. The policy replaces any and all previous policies regarding Infection Prevention and Control.

6. Key Principles

- 6.1 All staff shall endeavor to maintain best practice standards regarding Infection Prevention and Control across all regulated settings.
- 6.2 Staff will familiarise themselves with the NIPCM and be able to use this as a reference point and guide for all infection prevention and control matters.
- 6.3 Staff will have access to and ensure the correct use of appropriate PPE and facilities relevant to the task.
- 6.4 The following points are to be treated as standard precautions:
- Use effective hand hygiene
 - Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when dealing with blood and body fluids, including substances hazardous to health
 - Use and dispose of sharps safely
 - Manage equipment used in the delivery of care appropriately to limit the risk of contamination with microorganisms.
 - Adhere to local Environmental Hygiene Policy, including prompt management of blood and body fluid spillages
 - Dispose of clinical waste correctly and safely

- Manage linen used during the delivery of care appropriately to limit the risk of contamination with microorganisms

7. Infection Risk Assessments

- 7.1 Assessing a person's risk of catching or spreading an infection and providing them with information about infection is essential in supporting safety.
- 7.2 An assessment of a person's risk of infection should be carried out before they start using the service and should be kept under review for as long as they use the service. The assessment should contribute to the planning of the person's care and should determine whether any extra Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) precautions are required, such as whether they need to isolate or whether workers need to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE). The assessment should include all factors which place the person at a higher risk of catching or spreading infection and may include:
- Symptoms:
 - history of current diarrhoea or vomiting
 - unexplained rash
 - fever or temperature
 - respiratory symptoms, such as coughing or sneezing
 - Contact:
 - previous infection with a multi-drug resistant pathogen (where known)
 - recent travel outside the UK where there are known risks of infection
 - contact with people with a known infection
 - Person risk factors:
 - vaccination status which will assist assessment of their susceptibility to infection and allow protective actions to be taken when necessary
 - wounds or breaks in the skin
 - invasive devices such as urinary catheters
 - conditions or medicines that weaken the immune system
 - Environmental risk factors, such as poor ventilation in the care setting

8. Hand Hygiene

- 8.1 Hand hygiene is an important practice in reducing the transmission of infectious agents which cause infections.

- 8.2 Hands should be washed with warm/tepid water with liquid soap for at least 20 seconds, and in accordance with the hand washing steps illustrated on the hand washing posters, to mitigate the risk of dermatitis associated with repeated exposures to hot water and to maximise hand washing compliance. Compliance may be compromised where water is too hot or too cold. Hands should be dried thoroughly following hand washing.
- 8.3 Where staff are required to wash their hands in the service user's own home, they should do so for at least 20 seconds using any hand soap available.
- 8.4 Hand Sanitiser Gel should be used in addition to thorough hand washing techniques and does not replace the requirement to utilise hand washing. Hand Sanitiser Gel is not effective against some viruses such as Norovirus.
- 8.5 Further guidance on handwashing techniques is found in the Infection Prevention and Control Protocol in Section 10.

9. **Personal Protective Equipment**

- 9.1 PPE will be used when assessed as necessary to reduce the risk of transmission of pathogens and other risks associated with care tasks. PPE is the last element of the hierarchy of controls and used only when all other controls are considered insufficient to manage the risk of infection.
- 9.2 If it is not removed at the right time PPE can spread infection between people and wearing unnecessary PPE impacts on worker comfort, increases costs, and has adverse environmental impacts. The use of PPE should therefore be based on a risk assessment approach. When unsure what PPE is suitable in certain situations, advice can be sought the registered manager or their delegated person.
- 9.3 PPE will be stored in appropriate and designated areas within residential settings. This may include storing PPE in lidded containers or dispensers. PPE should never be stored on the floor. In domiciliary settings supporting people in their own home, or in supported living settings arrangements may include storing in a dry, clean area protected from dust – for example, in sealed containers in the person's home (with their permission and if safe to do so) or in staff's own vehicle.
- 9.4 PPE is to be treated as single use unless explicitly identified as reusable by the manufacturer, in which case it is important the instructions for decontamination are understood and followed.
- 9.5 Hand hygiene will be completed before putting on and after taking off PPE.
- 9.6 PPE must be changed if damaged or contaminated following the correct order for putting on and taking off (donning and doffing). All used PPE must be

appropriately disposed of following service procedures for disposal of infectious waste.

- 9.7 During the completion of all personal care tasks PPE must be worn as appropriate. This will reduce the risk of transmission or contamination of staff's clothing if there is the spillage or exposure to any bodily fluids such as blood, urine, or phlegm. More information on the dealing with spillages and bodily fluids can be found in section 11.

10. Disposal of Waste

- 10.1 Waste such as dressings and disposable clothing can cause infection. All waste products which include incontinence, and other waste produced from humans and sanitary products should be disposed of in the appropriate coloured bags.
- 10.2 The BCBC Absorbent Hygiene Products Collection (which uses purple bags) caters for nappies, wipes, paper tissues, stoma bags, adult incontinence pads and nappies, absorbent bed sheets, plastic gloves, and disposable aprons.
- 10.3 Clinical waste products are also to be disposed of in the appropriately allocated bins. Any sharps are to be disposed in Sharps boxes and collected following the correct processes set out by the service as per the Infection Prevention and Control Protocol.
- 10.4 For clinical waste in support at home domiciliary care setting, for people who are self-medicating with no clinical infections, they should place dressings and bandages in their landfill bags.

11. Cleaning and Procedures for the Cleaning of Spillages

- 11.1 In accommodation-based services, maintaining premises in good order reduces the risk of infection. All staff have a responsibility to help keep the home clean and tidy and to identify areas which fall below acceptable or safe standards. The manager will ensure that there is a full cleaning schedule in place and where necessary staff will ensure checklists are maintained to evidence that cleaning procedures have been undertaken in line with the schedule. The manager is responsible for communicating cleaning procedures and schedule to staff. Any staff with concerns about the standard of hygiene and cleanliness should bring them to the attention of their line manager. The manager will have overall responsibility to ensure that the cleaning schedule is being maintained and for monitoring its effectiveness to ensure high standards of hygiene and cleanliness.
- 11.2 With regards to domiciliary care, staff must bring to the attention of their manager any concerns about the cleanliness / physical condition of a person's home.

- 11.3 Spillages will inevitably occur from time to time, and it is essential that each occurrence is dealt with appropriately, and where necessary, cleaning fluids are used.
- 11.4 PPE will always be worn when dealing with spillages of blood, vomit, faeces, and other bodily fluids in concordance with the above statements and following manufacturer guidance.
- 11.5 Cleaning of care equipment will take place at a minimum of weekly unless incidents dictate for it to be cleaned sooner. All equipment will be maintained and serviced in line with manufacturer's instructions.
- 11.6 Care workers and Registered Managers must ensure that they are only ever using approved products for cleaning processes to ensure they are to the required standard. When using the products, care must be given to ensuring the correct dilutions and contact time is followed and ensuring an effective 2-stage cleaning process which allows for proper cleaning and disinfection to take place.

12. Isolation

- 12.1 In order to reduce and minimise the risk of transmission of infections and infectious agents, there may be a requirement for individuals supported by accommodation-based services to be placed in isolation.
- 12.2 The decision for this will be based on a case-by-case basis to ensure the liberty of the individuals is protected at all times, whilst also ensuring the safety of other people supported by the service and minimizing the risk of transmission and spread of infection.
- 12.3 Each service will follow all national guidelines and laws in relation to Covid-19 and any required isolation periods.
- 12.4 It is not possible to isolate individuals supported at home in the community. Risk assessments will be completed, including giving consideration to whether there is a need to cohort residents and/or staff, and staff will wear the appropriate PPE at all times whilst supporting the individual(s).

13. Commissioning and Procurement arrangements

- 13.1 All contracts that are put in place with commissioned services and providers, set out BCBC's expectation to provide a service in line with all relevant and current national legislation, guidance, and frameworks.
- 13.2 All providers have been and are regularly made aware of the NIPCM and the expectation by Bridgend County Borough Council to follow and be compliant with the manual.

14. Training for Infection Prevention and Control

- 14.1 Training is provided to social care staff via the form of online awareness courses provided by Social Care Workforce Development Program (SCWDP).
- 14.2 Social care staff are also required to complete the relevant NHS Preventing Infection workbook for either Residential or Domiciliary Services. This workbook has been developed by the NHS alongside the NIPCM and with Social Care Wales (SCW) to provide practical experience for dealing with and preventing infections.

15. Reporting of Outbreaks

- 15.1 As mentioned in 4.5.2, Registered Managers have the responsibility to report outbreaks of infection to Public Health Wales and/or Environmental Health.
- 15.2 Certain outbreaks of infectious diseases also need to be reported to Care Inspectorate Wales.
- 15.3 Outbreaks of gastro-intestinal diseases such as sickness or Norovirus are reportable to Environmental Health at communicabledisease@cardiff.gov.uk.
- 15.4 Communicable diseases such as C. difficile, Influenza & non-gastrointestinal should be reported to AWARE in Public Health Wales.

16. Guidance

- 16.1 The NIPCM can be found [here](#)

| | |
|--|---|
| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024 - 2028 |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CHIEF OFFICER, FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE |
| Responsible Officer: | ZOE EDWARDS, CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES MANAGER |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules. |
| Executive Summary: | All public bodies in Wales must comply with the Public Sector Equality. One of the specific duties is to produce a Strategic Equality Plan |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to commence a public consultation on the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Equality Act outlines that all public bodies in Wales must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty which gives us general duties and specific duties. One of the specific duties is to produce the Strategic Equality Plan. Some of the other specific duties include engaging with residents and carrying out equality impact assessments and publishing employment monitoring data.

The Equality Act introduced a General Duty for public bodies to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity and;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 2.2 The Equality Act also introduced specific duties which include:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them and;
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on the Council's identified.

- 2.3 Within the Strategic Equality Plan the Council must publish equality objectives that describe how the most pressing issues for people in Bridgend will be addressed for the next four years.
- 2.4 Annual progress reports describing the work involved in implementing the corporate Strategic Equality Plans have been presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee since 2016.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The equality objectives have now been proposed in order to develop a new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 – 2028. Consultation and engagement exercises will be carried out in order to approve the equalities objectives (**Appendix 1**).

In order to produce a draft of the objectives, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Reviewed the current Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 and action plan for this period.
- Used the council's new corporate objectives of:
 - better and more targeted use of resources,
 - One council, working well together and with partners
 - Improving communication, engagement and responsiveness
 - Supporting and empowering communities
 - protecting the services that matter to you the most
- Given further consideration to each of the nine protected characteristics covered by the three main aims of the general duty and the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other actions prohibited in the Equality Act 2010.
- Considered national and local issues.
- Assessed lessons learnt from networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of domestic abuse victims, violence against women, sexual violence and hate crime.
- Looked at a number of the Council's existing plans and strategies as well as the consultations which took place to inform their development.
- Used feedback from local equality and diversity groups and via the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum such as how accessible Council services are to provide support as well as promote and raise awareness of issues such as hate crime and LGBTQ History Month.

- 3.2 In addition staff and stakeholders have been engaged and relevant information used, including Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reports, Welsh Government reports, internal strategies and the results of staff engagement exercises as well as community groups' engagement exercises.
- 3.3 The following objectives have been proposed in line with the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EQHR) 'Is Wales Fairer?' report and with agreement from our internal equalities forum that have contributed to shaping these equality objectives:

| Objective | What we hope to achieve/support? |
|--|---|
| Objective 1: Access to services | Improve the experience and outcomes for our citizens, ensuring that every resident has equity of access to the services that they need. |
| Objective 2: Protecting our most vulnerable | To establish comprehensive policies and procedures that effectively safeguard and support the rights and well-being of our most vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness or poverty and those that access care and support from Social Services |
| Objective 3: Living Standards | Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty. Consideration to vital services such as Housing and homelessness, cost of living and the effect adverse effects on individuals. |
| Objective 4: Participation & Engagement | Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Building and increasing quality relationships with communities to ensure a focus on what matters to them |
| Objective 5: Learning | To promote equal access to quality learning for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, abilities, age or ethnic background. Support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout. |
| Objective 6: Employment | Promote a more inclusive workforce that values diversity. Improve the participation, wellbeing, and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics. |

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no Climate Change Implications from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The consultation will be funded from existing revenue budgets.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet give approval for the commencement of a public consultation on the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 and note that the final Strategy will be reported back to Cabinet for approval.

Background documents

None

Draft Strategic Equality Plan Objectives 2024-2028

Strategic Equality Plan Draft objectives consultation

Overview

This consultation is to invite views on Bridgend County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

This consultation aims to seek the views of residents, our workforce, elected members and stakeholders on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 is being developed to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which came into force on 6 April 2011.

The equality objectives will demonstrate how the council will go about promoting equal opportunities for all and making a real difference to the lives of those living and working in Bridgend County Borough.

The Strategic Equality Plan will ensure that we have clear objectives and a set of actions to demonstrate how we will deliver our equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive and effective organisation that is representative of our community and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

The results from this consultation will be used to inform our final Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, which will be implemented in April 2024.

How to respond

This consultation period will begin on the **xxx December 2023** and close on the **xx February 2024**. You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways:

Tel: (01656) 643 664

Email: Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk

Online: www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation

Post: Communications, Marketing and Engagement, Bridgend County Borough local authority, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB. Alternative formats are also available upon request.

Data protection

Information provided by you on this form will be used to inform the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

The Council will take all reasonable precautions to ensure confidentiality and to comply with data protection legislation. Your information may be shared with relevant service areas for the purposes of future policy development. Your information will be retained in accordance with the Council's Data Retention Policy.

You have a number of rights under data protection legislation. You may also withdraw your consent and ask us to delete your personal information at any time by contacting us. Further information about this is available on our website or you may contact the Data Protection Officer.

If you are dissatisfied with the manner in which we process your personal data then you have the option to make a complaint to the Data Protection Officer and the Information Commissioner's Office.

Related documents

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/wales-fairer-2018>

The Purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan

This Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 is being developed to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which came into force on 6 April 2011.

Building on our previous equalities work the Plan will explain to residents, our workforce, elected members and stakeholders how Bridgend County Borough Council will to deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive and effective organisation that is representative of our community and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

Within the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are outlined below:

Public Sector Equality Duty

The General Duty

When making decisions and delivering services we must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report).
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Specific Duties

The Equality Act provides a power to make regulations imposing duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duty; these are known as the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties and are different in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Welsh Government published regulations that introduced the Specific Duties for Wales in March 2011, these set out the actions the Council must take in order to comply and include the following areas:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them;
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty;
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on the Council's identified;
- Publish employment monitoring information annually;
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst its employees and use its performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of its employees in relation to the General Duties;
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified;
- Think about including conditions relevant to the General Duty in its procurement processes.

Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic.

The law is designed to protect them, the protected characteristics are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Age | • Disability |
| • Gender Reassignment | • Marriage and civil partnership |
| • Pregnancy and maternity | • Race |
| • Religion or belief | • Sex |
| • Sexual orientation | |

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 has been put in place to make sure that public bodies are doing all they can to contribute to the improvement of the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The Act introduces seven long-term well-being goals, puts in place a sustainable development principle, and defines 5 ways of working that public bodies will need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle. The diagram below shows how the seven national goals, the sustainable development and the five ways of working work together.



The Council is committed to the well-being goals and the sustainable development principle, making sure that when we make decisions we take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.

Relevant information we will use

As well as listening to our residents, communities and our staff we will also use a range of equality information to support us in identifying equality objectives.

We will look at regional priorities for Bridgend, Council Priorities, Service Delivery plans and their Self Assessments and will review the progress that the Council’s services have already made in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duties.

We will review national and external sources such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Welsh Government policy and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics.

Whilst a number of external reports and EHRC inquiries have contributed to the development of the Equality Objectives, outlined below is the key report that assisted in shaping the objectives:

Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

This report addresses seven key challenges that need to be addressed in Wales. The EHRC states there are major, entrenched inequalities and human rights abuses that will require substantial efforts of public, private and third sector organisations and of individuals to reduce them.

The 7 challenges are:

- Close attainment gaps in education;
- Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment;
- Improve living conditions in cohesive communities;

- Increase access to justice and encourage democratic participation;
- Improve access to mental health services and support people experiencing poor mental health;
- Prevent abuse, neglect and ill treatment in care and detention;
- Eliminate violence, abuse and harassment in the community.

This report has acted as a key driver for the development of the Council's Equality Objectives.

How we developed our Equality Objectives

In order to develop our equalities objectives we have:

- Reviewed our Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 and our action plan for this period.
- Used the council's new corporate objectives of:
 - better and more targeted use of resources,
 - One council, working well together and with partners
 - Improving communication, engagement and responsiveness
 - Supporting and empowering communities
 - protecting the services that matter to you the most
- We have developed a consultation toolkit to support a more consistent and effective approach to consulting and engaging with our communities.
- Given further consideration to each of the nine protected characteristics covered by the three main aims of the general duty and the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other actions prohibited in the Equality Act 2010.
- Considered national and local issues.
- Assessed what we have learnt from regional networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of domestic abuse affected families, domestic violence, sexual violence and hate crime
- Looked at a number of the council's existing plans and strategies as well as the consultations which took place to inform their development,
- Used feedback that we regularly get from local equality and diversity groups and via the Internal Corporate Equalities Forum such as how accessible our services are and how we can help support, promote and raise awareness of issues such as an Anti-racist Wales action plan.

Our Equality objectives

To develop the equality objectives, we will engage with residents, staff, elected members and stakeholders and use relevant information, including EHRC reports, Welsh Government reports, internal strategies and the results of staff engagement exercises as well as community groups' engagement exercises.

We have set our overarching objectives in line with the findings of the EHRC Is Wales Fairer report, as detailed below:

Access to services

Improve the experience and outcomes for our citizens, ensuring that every resident has equity of access to the services that they need.

Protecting our most vulnerable

To establish comprehensive policies and procedures that effectively safeguard and support the rights and well-being of our most vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness or poverty and those that access care and support from Social Services.

Living Standards

Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty. Consideration to vital services such as Housing and homelessness, cost of living and the effect adverse effects on individuals.

Participation & Engagement

Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Building and increasing quality relationships with communities to ensure a focus on what matters to them.

Learning

To promote equal access to quality learning for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, abilities, age or ethnic background. Support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout.

Employment

Promote a more inclusive workplace that values diversity. Improve the participation, wellbeing, and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics

Process

The purpose of this consultation document is to outline the overarching objectives which will then enable us to develop an action plan to support our objectives. This document has been prepared to provide information about the objectives in order to allow residents, our workforce, stakeholders and elected members the opportunity to have their say.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period all comments received will be presented to the local authority's Cabinet and all views expressed will be taken into account in the compilation of the Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028.

The table below sets out the timetable for the consultation:

| What | When |
|--|-------------------------|
| Consultation begins | Xx December 2023 |
| Consultation ends | Xx February 2024 |
| Publication of Strategic Equality Plan | 1 April 2024 |

Who is being consulted

This consultation aims to seek the views of residents, staff, elected members and stakeholders on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028. The Consultation and Engagement Team will visit Equality Groups within the County Borough to ensure that the views of members of equality groups are fully considered.

Community Engagement Workshops

| Venue | Time | Date |
|----------------------|------------|---------------|
| Maesteg Library | 4pm-6pm | January 2024 |
| Pencoed Library | 11am-1pm | January 2024 |
| Bridgend Life Centre | 6pm-8pm | January 2024 |
| Porthcawl Library | 9.30am-1pm | February 2024 |

Agenda Item 8

| | |
|--|---|
| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMME STRATEGY (HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY) 2022 - 2026 |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE |
| Responsible Officer: | MARTIN MORGANS HEAD OF PARTNERSHIP SERVICES |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules. |
| Executive Summary: | To seek approval to adopt and submit a final Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 – 2026 to Welsh Government, which has been updated following a period of public consultation. This document will replace Bridgend County Borough Council’s (BCBC) existing Homelessness Strategy 2018- 2022. Having this strategy in place is a Welsh Government requirement. |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the final Housing Support Programme Strategy (Homelessness Strategy) 2022-2026 and Action Plan for submission to Welsh Government.

2. Background

- 2.1 Part 2 of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the Authority to carry out a Homelessness Review for its area and then formulate and adopt a Homelessness Strategy, based on the results of that review. Any review and strategy must look at the achievement of the following objectives:

- The prevention of homelessness
- That suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless

- That satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless

2.2 The format of the Strategy attached at **Appendix 1** is prescribed by Welsh Government to all Local Authorities in the Housing Support Grant Guidance.

2.3 An Independent consultant was commissioned to undertake the review on behalf of the Authority. This offered an impartial and fresh perspective for the Strategy. This review has been one of co-production of the Strategy and all key stakeholder groups were surveyed or interviewed, including people that use, or have used homelessness services. Key statistics were analysed along with a review of relevant local and national policies to identify needs.

2.4 The Homelessness Review has provided the necessary information to draft the Homelessness Strategy as per Welsh Government guidance. The key messages from the review are:

- The period of 2020/2021 saw the highest level of presentations ever recorded by Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), 1,612 presentations, which was likely influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'All In' approach.
- In 2021/2022 there were 1,290 applications. This is a decrease in applications from the peak in 2020/2021 however, this number is still a marked increase on presentations compared to the figures at the time of BCBC's 2018 Homelessness Review and Strategy. During 2017/2018, 1,032 homelessness presentations were made, which is fewer than 2021/2022.
- The demand for social housing has increased. The number of new applications added to the Common Housing Register has increased significantly from 147 in 2019/2020, to 428 in 2020/2021 - an increase of 191%. 2021/2022 saw a further increase of 104%, with 873 applications and, as at the 20th of February 2023, an additional increase of 14%, with 993 applications.
- The total number of applicants on the Common Housing Register at the end of each year has increased substantially. During 2019/2020 there were 816 applicants, in 2020/2021 that had increased by 81% to 1,477. During 2021/2022 the figure had increased by a further 45% to 2,143. As at 4th July 2023, there were 2,629 applicants on the register.
- The use of temporary accommodation has grown exponentially from pre-Covid levels with figures strongly impacted by the 'All In' approach during and post-Covid. The number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of each financial year shows:
 - 2018/2019 - 71 households
 - 2019/2020 – 83 households
 - 2020/2021- 167 households
 - 2021/2022 - 199 households

- 2022/2023 – 253 households
- Single person households consistently make up a significant portion of applications. In 2020/21 it was 73% of all applications, in 2021/22 single person applications accounted for 68% of all applications.
- The majority of homelessness applications were from the 25 year+ category at 76% in 2020/21 and 75% in 2021/22.
- Applications from 18 – 24 year olds accounted for 22% in both 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- Applications from 16 – 17 year olds reduced from 6% in 2018/19 to 1% in 2020/21, then increasing to 3% in 2021/22.
- There is a lack of private rented accommodation available within the Local Housing Allowance rate in Bridgend. An on-line search on Zoopla as at the 4th July 2023 showed the total number of properties to rent was 44. Of those, the search identified no available properties within the Local Housing Allowance rate for any property size, highlighting the significant lack of private properties available to rent at an affordable rate for those reliant on the Local Housing Allowance.

2.5 On 18 July 2023 Cabinet approved a 12 week public consultation on the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy and Action Plan.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Following Cabinet approval a formal public consultation period on the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy and Action Plan was held between 20th July 2023 and 12th October 2023. Links to the online consultation were shared widely with stakeholders.

3.2 The consultation received 33 online responses. Of the responses:

- 81.3% agreed with the Strategy's aim
- 78.1% agreed that the Strategy clearly explains the challenges the Council faces in delivering homelessness and housing support services
- 65.6% agreed with the Council's strategic priorities and objectives as set out in the Strategy
- 78.7% either agreed or partially agreed that the Action Plan details the steps that will be taken to deliver the Strategy

3.3 In addition to online responses, a response to the consultation was received from BCBC's Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate (both adults and children).

3.4 The draft Strategy and Action Plan were also presented to an all member briefing on 15 September 2023 and to the Subject and Overview Scrutiny Committee 3 on 25 September 2023 for comments and consideration. The Committee made the following recommendations:

- To strengthen the Strategy in terms of support for veterans and Armed Services personnel.
- To maximise effectiveness of the Strategy, that the strategic priority objectives be reviewed to ensure that they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound) and set out in the Action Plan and the timescales be broken down further detailing the year and month in which each action is planned to be achieved, so that progress can be clearly measured.
- That the Strategy be made more user friendly and as easy to navigate as possible.

3.5 It should be noted that in developing the Strategy and prior to public consultation, key stakeholders were consulted when formulating the priorities and actions that have been identified and included in the Strategy and Action Plan. This has included relevant internal and external stakeholders and the Council's key partners.

3.6 The Strategy at **Appendix 1** and Action Plan at **Appendix 2** have been revised, taking into consideration the comments received during the consultation period. Sections 1 to 4 of the Strategy outline the current position in Bridgend, whilst section 5 to 7 details the direction of travel for housing and homelessness services. The Action Plan details specific actions, which will be taken forward. Once approved by Cabinet, the Strategy and Action Plan will be submitted to Welsh Government and published on BCBC's website.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 Tackling homelessness is a Welsh Government priority. The report contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales – Reducing homelessness supports a prosperous Wales by reducing cost to the public purse.
- A resilient Wales – Our Housing Support Programme Strategy aims to prevent and relieve homelessness, increasing the resilience of both individuals supported and the general structures in place to support the goal of achieving a position where homelessness in Wales is rare, brief and non recurrent.
- A Wales of cohesive communities – Preventing individuals from becoming homeless will support cohesive communities.
- A globally responsive Wales – Homelessness is an issue across the globe. These strategic documents set out the approach Bridgend will take to support Wales in its efforts around this agenda.

5.2 It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 The prevention and relief of homelessness supports the agenda around climate change. A key priority is to increase BCBC's affordable housing supply to meet demand, with the intention of informing affordable housing schemes to meet these needs. Any schemes developed through Social Housing Grant will be developed in line with Welsh Government planning and standards requirements, which support moves to tackle climate change.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 Homelessness and housing support services play a key role in supporting BCBC's safeguarding agenda, both from an individual perspective with services often supporting vulnerable individuals, known to safeguarding agencies.

7.2 The priorities set out in the Housing Support Programme Strategy reference a need to improve collaboration with key stakeholders, with specific objectives around improving collaboration to implement the national care leavers and accommodation and support framework, a key part of Corporate Parenting implications.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

- It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Housing Support Programme Strategy (Homelessness Strategy) 2022-2026 (**Appendix 1**) and Action Plan (**Appendix 2**) for submission to Welsh Government.

Background documents

None

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Bridgend County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

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Bridgend County Borough Council Housing Support Programme Strategy

2022-2026

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1.0 Foreword

We are pleased to present Bridgend County Borough Council's Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026. This strategy outlines the Council's strategic priorities, our objectives and what we, alongside our partners aim to do over the next four years, to tackle homelessness across the county borough.

Since publishing our last homelessness strategy, we have developed and delivered services which have helped to successfully prevent and relieve the homelessness of thousands of households, including safeguarding vulnerable households during the peak of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Our strategy recognises that our services face significant challenges, including the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. In particular, we have seen an exponential rise in the number of households accessing our services and entering temporary accommodation.

As we exit the direct pressure of the pandemic our local communities are now facing a cost-of-living crisis, which is impacting across all areas of society. With the needs of households becoming more complex and time critical, the demand for affordable housing and support services is unprecedented. This strategy sets out how we will work collaboratively with our partners and third sector services to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeatable.

The scale of the challenge ahead should not be underestimated. However, with the continued commitment to our strategic priorities and with the development of the new Rapid Rehousing approach to homelessness we hope to make a real change within our community.



Councillor Rhys Goode

Cabinet Member Housing, Planning and Regeneration

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets out Bridgend County Borough Council's strategic direction for delivering homelessness and housing related support services for 2022-2026. It encompasses the strategic requirements as set out in Welsh Government's Housing Support Grant Guidance and the statutory requirements for a Homelessness Strategy set out in Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The strategy will have a mid-point review, after 2 years.

This four year strategy replaces the Authority's 'Strategy to Tackle Homelessness in Bridgend County Borough 2018-2022'. It identifies key priorities for Bridgend County Borough Council and its partners, in the delivery of homelessness prevention and other housing related support services. These priorities have been developed following a substantial review of homelessness and housing related support services, the cornerstone of which was a comprehensive needs assessment and stakeholder engagement.

The delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy will support Welsh Government's commitment to making homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable, with a priority given to homelessness prevention. It supports the ambitions for a transitional shift to a rapid rehousing approach, as specified in Welsh Government's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. The strategy also sets out how the Local Authority will continue to meet presenting demands as we move through the Covid 19 pandemic.

An action plan and Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan support the delivery of the strategic priorities set out.

2.2 Legislative and Policy Context

Whilst this strategy sets a single strategic vision for homelessness and housing related support services, it is important that it is considered as part of a wider national and local context.

The development and delivery of this strategy will contribute to the following national legislation and policy:

Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework for Wales

The Framework helps organisations that support young people in making their journeys towards leaving care. It sets out five stages organisations should consider, and which care leavers should progress towards living independently.

Ending Homelessness in Wales: A High Level Action Plan 2021-2026

The Action Plan details the work required by the Welsh Government and its partners to end homelessness in Wales. The Action Plan draws on the Welsh Government's Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness and the work of the expert Homelessness Action Group (HAG). The HAG engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders, including people who have had personal experiences of homelessness.

Equality Act 2010

This Act legally protects people from discrimination and sets out how all public bodies, including Local Authorities, need to consider discrimination, the needs of people who are disadvantaged or those who suffer inequality when shaping policies, delivering services and within all day-to-day work.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and potential future changes relating to 'priority need'

This Act reformed homelessness law and strengthened the duty on Local Authorities to prevent homelessness. The Housing Support Grant links in with Part 2 of the Act as it funds provisions aimed at preventing homelessness and/or supporting those who are homeless.

The ethos of the legislation is prevention, but true prevention starts far earlier than the 56 days set out in the legislation. The homelessness legislation should be seen as the safety net when all other preventative actions have failed.

Housing Support Grant Practice Guidance

The Housing Support Grant (HSG) is an amalgamation of three existing grants - Supporting People Programme, Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement.

The HSG is an early intervention grant designed to support activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. The emphasis is on working together to prevent homelessness and where it cannot be prevented ensuring it is rare, brief and un-repeated. To do this we need to tackle the root cause of homelessness and work to enable people to stay in their own homes longer.

It supports vulnerable people to address the, sometimes, multiple problems they face, such as debt, unemployment, tenancy management, substance misuse, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and mental health issues.

The HSG allows a single costed strategy at local level and ensures a continuum of services to most effectively address local need. Whilst services are commissioned at a local level, Welsh Government will continue to develop national programmes to complement.

National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel

This Housing Pathway is a response to one of the key concerns of serving personnel on leaving the Armed Forces: finding suitable accommodation and knowing where to find help

It ensures practitioners and stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. In particular, Part 2 which addresses the duties on Local Authorities to provide preventative homelessness services, and also other relevant frameworks and good practice.

In recognition of their service to their country, the Welsh Government believes that every former member of the Armed Forces should have help, if needed, to find suitable accommodation, whether directly on discharge or later in life.

National pathway for homelessness services to children, young people and adults in the secure estate in Wales

The National Pathway is designed to support Local Authorities, Youth Offending Teams and the Wales Community Rehabilitation Company to carry out their responsibilities in respect of providing services to people due to leave the secure estate. The Pathway offers a significant opportunity to help individuals avoid homelessness on release from custody.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

This Act aims to simplify the process of renting a home in Wales and to provide parties with more information about their rights and obligations, giving tenants more security in their tenancy.

This piece of legislation will have a direct impact on the number of households accessing homelessness services as there have been several changes which will benefit tenants. Landlords will no longer be able to issue retaliation eviction notices, one person leaving a joint tenancy no longer automatically ends the tenancy for all and a new succession right for carers has been created.

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

This Act aims to improve the contribution individuals, and their carers, have in the care and support they receive. By making decisions about their care and support, in equal partnership with professionals, the aim is to improve wellbeing.

Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation with their relevant partners and others, in relation to adults with needs for care and support, carers and children. The focus on a multi-agency approach will help make sure the principles of voice and control are achieved through the design and operation of services. It also provides Welsh Ministers with regulation making powers in relation to formal partnership arrangements, resources for partnership arrangements (including pooled funds) and partnership boards.

Each local health board, and the local authorities within that local health board area, are required to put in place a partnership arrangement to undertake the population assessment of care and support needs for adults, children and carers.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

The principal objective of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 is to improve the public sector response in Wales to gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Public bodies, including Local Authorities, have a responsibility to improve arrangements to promote awareness of, and

prevent, protect and support victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, sexual violence and modern slavery.

Welsh Government Strategy to End Homelessness 2019

This sets out the strategic approach Welsh Government are taking to prevent and address homelessness in Wales. The overarching pledge is to make homelessness rare, brief and unrepeated.

The policy statement highlights the need to shift energy and resources to preventing homelessness from happening in the first place. Welsh Government are clear, homelessness cannot be prevented through housing alone. The strategy advocates a desire to get a range of public services, not simply housing services, working collaboratively to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the seven well-being goals

The Act requires public bodies, including Local Authorities in Wales, to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

It aims to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action to ensure current and future generations have a good quality of life. Local Authorities need to think about the long-term impact of their decisions.

Prevention is a key focus of the sustainable development principle and this replicates the central aims of the Housing Support Grant.

Locally the development and delivery of this strategy will contribute to the following policies:

- Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2023-2028
- Bridgend County Borough Council Older Person's Housing, Care and Support Strategy 2022 – 2027
- Bridgend County Borough Council Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan
- Bridgend County Borough Council Social Housing Allocation Policy
- Bridgend County Borough Council Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate Service Delivery Plan 2020-2025
- Bridgend County Borough Council Rapid Rehousing Protocol
- Bridgend County Borough Council Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2021 to 2026
- Bridgend Public Services Board Well-being Plan
- Cwm Taff Morgannwg VAWDASV Strategy 2022-2026
- BCBC Corporate Parenting Strategy and the need to improve joint working across housing and social services, to meet the needs of care experienced children and young people.

2.3 Vision and Principles

This strategy sets out Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) four year vision for the delivery of homelessness and housing related support services. Our vision for the strategy underpins Bridgend's overall vision to act as "one council working together to improve lives".

Our vision for homelessness and housing support services is:

"To work in partnership with stakeholders to prevent homelessness, ensuring that where prevention is not possible, homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeated. Those who access services will be given the support required to live as independently as possible."

Our principles are to:

- Work collaboratively with other agencies and regions to prevent and relieve homelessness
- Ensure our services have a person centred and holistic approach, providing the most effective support for service users
- Build resilience within individuals, enabling them to help resolve their own issues
- Utilise resources efficiently, recognising that housing is a scarce resource

Our aims are to:

- Prioritise the prevention of homelessness, ensuring early intervention
- Continue to improve collaboration between the statutory functions within the Local Authority
- Continue to improve working arrangements between the Local Authority and Registered Social Landlords to facilitate co-operation in line with Section 95 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Ensure that support and accommodation options are accessible and available for all service users

3.0 Needs Assessment

3.1 Needs Assessment Process

The Needs Assessment process undertaken as part of the development of this strategy has involved a comprehensive assessment of a range of data sets, which have informed a Statement of Need.

Our needs assessment and Statement of Need has analysed data sets, including population needs, common housing register waiting lists, homelessness statistics and Housing Support Grant outcomes. An analysis of these data sets helps us to understand the current and future needs for homelessness and housing related support services.

3.2 Sets out the key findings, from the Statement of Need

The Population

- The population of Bridgend is increasing and the rate of the increase in Bridgend is higher than the overall Welsh population increase. The population of Bridgend grew 4.5% between 2011 and 2021, compared to a national increase of 1.4% over the same period. The Office for National Statistics predicts that the population of Bridgend will grow by at least a further 3% by 2030.
- The population of Bridgend is ageing. Whilst, as highlighted above, there was an increase in population between 2011 and 2021, many of the younger age groups saw a percentage decrease during this period whilst all age groups beyond the age of 50 saw a percentage increase. In 2021 21% of the population of Bridgend were aged 65 or over.

Homelessness Applications

- Since our 2018-2022 Homelessness Strategy, homelessness applications to BCBC have increased significantly. Applications increased from 1,032 applications in 2017/18 to 1,290 in 2021/22, representing a 25% increase.
- The number of applications received in 2020/21 was the highest annual amount BCBC has ever received, peaking at 1,612.
- The average number of homelessness applications BCBC receives has increased from an average of 908 per year between 2014/15 and 2017/28 to an average of 1,363 between 2018/19 and 2021/22. Applications to the Council have therefore increased significantly.
- Applications from single person households accounts for a significant proportion of all applications and this proportion has increased over the last 4 years. In 2018/19 and 2021/22 single person applications accounted for 61-64% of all applications, whilst in 2020/21 and 2021/22 this percentage increased to 68-73%.
- The majority of homelessness applications are from those aged 25 and over, whilst applications from 16 & 17 year olds have decreased. In 2021/22 applications from individuals of these ages accounted for 3% (34 applicants) of all applications, whilst in 2018/19 they accounted for 6% (78 applicants) of all applications.

Temporary Accommodation

- Temporary accommodation placements by the Council have increased significantly. Between the end of March 2019 and the end of January 2023 there was a 251% increase in temporary accommodation placements. At the end of January there were 249 households in temporary accommodation.
- The most significant increase in temporary accommodation was between 2019/20 and 2020/21 i.e. the first year of the Covid 19 pandemic. This period alone saw a percentage increase of 101% in placements (83 placements at the end of 2019/20 to 167 placements at the end of 2020/21).

- To meet the demand, temporary accommodation stock increased 159% between February 2020 and July 2023. The majority of additional units taken on have been from the tourism sector, such as holiday lets and B&B's. Having not routinely been used at all in February 2020, tourism units now make up 51% of the Council's temporary accommodation capacity.
- The cost of the additional units of accommodation is significant and has increased exponentially. The cost of temporary accommodation to the Council increased by 2196% between 2019/20 and 2021/22. Again the most significant increase in cost in the first year of the Covid 19 pandemic. This period alone saw a percentage increase of 1604% in costs (£135,000 in 2019/20 to £2,300,000 in 2020/21).
- Whilst the majority of temporary accommodation placements last under 6 months, the length of time spent in temporary accommodation has increased, with an increase in the number of households spending 6 – 12 months in placements.

Rough Sleepers

- The number of rough sleepers, compared to the number of homelessness presentations is relatively very low. Between November 2020 and December 2022 the average number of rough sleepers identified at the end of each month was 5. Over the same period there was a range of 1 to 13 identified rough sleepers at any one time.

Private Rent Sector

- According to the Office for National Statistics the number of people privately renting in Bridgend has increased from 12.3% of the population in 2011 to 15.3% in 2021.
- A desktop search of available privately rented properties in July 2023 suggests that there are no properties available to rent at Local Housing Allowance or Universal Credit rates.
- The average private rental costs in Bridgend are vastly in excess of Local Housing Allowance or Universal Credit rates. These challenges are particularly acute for larger family homes, with the average rent for 3 and 4 bedroom properties over double the equivalent Local Housing Allowance rates.

Social Housing and the Common Housing Register

- The number of households on the Council's Common Housing Register increased by 212% between March 2020 and February 2023. As of July 2023, there were 2,629 households on the Common Housing Register.
- The majority of households on the Common Housing Register (59%) are waiting for an allocation of a 1 bedroom property.
- There are more households on the Common Housing Register for 4 and 5 bedroom properties, than there are units of social housing stock across the borough. As such even if all of those in 4 and 5 bedroom social housing properties vacated, enabling an allocation to those on the Common Housing Register, there would still not be enough

properties to meet this particular need. In the case of 5 bedroom properties the number of households on the Common Housing Register (34 households) is nearly 6 times as much as the number of 5 bedroom social housing units (6).

Housing Support Grant (HSG)

- The number of households being supported by HSG funded services is increasing. Between 2018 and 2021/22 there was an increase of 31% in the number of households accessing services. In 2021/22 2,970 households were supported by HSG funded services.
- Since 2018 the most common support need of those accessing services has been those requiring support to prevent homelessness. Those over the age of 55 and requiring support has consistently been the second highest support need. Households requiring support with mental health, women experiencing domestic abuse and single persons aged 25-54 are also common support needs of those accessing services.
- The majority of households accessing HSG funded services have more than 1 support need (between 58% and 60%). Between 34% and 45% have more than 2 support needs.
- HSG funded services support households across a range of tenures with those in temporary accommodation supported more than any other tenure type.

Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

- BCBC VAWDASV services are supporting more individuals deemed to be 'High Risk', with an increase of 91% in referrals of this nature between 2021 and 2022, alone.

Looked After Children in Bridgend

- Since 2018/19 19.1% of care leavers have made a homelessness application (55 individuals). Of these 55 individuals 56.4% have gone on to make more than 1 homelessness application.
- On average, homelessness applications from care leavers accounted for 2.5% of all homelessness applications between 2020 and 2022 and 11.3% of applications from all 18-24 year olds who presented as homeless or threatened with homelessness over the same time period.
- The average age, at the point of a care leavers first application, was 19 years and 7 months. This suggests that individuals are not presenting as homeless directly after leaving care, but on average within the first 2 years of doing so.

Armed Forces Personnel

- Since 2020, 8 homelessness applications were received as a direct result of the applicant leaving the Armed Forces and having no other suitable accommodation in which to reside.

- 18 applicants reported to have an additional support need as a result of serving in the Armed Forces
- More generally, since 2020, 260 applicants who presented as homeless disclosed to have previously served in the Armed Forces

3.3 Conclusion

➤ Demand for homelessness and housing support services has dramatically increased

All data analysis, including a review of homelessness services, the common housing register and Housing Support Grant funded services, evidences that demand for homelessness and housing support services is increasing. Whilst the population of Bridgend is increasing and at a faster rate than the national average, the level of increase in demand on homelessness and housing related support services is exponential.

Whilst in and around the time of the Covid pandemic we saw an increase in demand for services, it is clear that demands on services are increasing for reasons more broadly, than just the pandemic alone.

Demand was increasing prior to the pandemic and whilst some measures suggest a peak was reached during 2020/21, there remains high demand for services, which significantly outweighs the demands at the time of our last homelessness strategy.

A key demand pressure is from single persons who make up an increasing proportion of all homelessness presentations and demand on the common housing register.

➤ Temporary Accommodation resources are a particular pressure point

The key findings relating to demands on temporary accommodation are stark. A 251% increase in placements, 101% increase in available units and 2196% increase in costs all point to an area of service which is under severe pressure.

The extreme increase in costs can largely be attributed to a new reliance on tourism accommodation units, which now account for 51% of all temporary accommodation stock, having previously not been routinely utilised for this purpose.

The dramatic increase in temporary accommodation demand in 2020/21 appears to be a direct result of the 'All In' approach from the Welsh Government. With temporary changes to legislation now being mainstreamed into primary legislation it is not likely that these demands will decrease.

➤ Support needs of individuals accessing services are significant

The level of demand for housing related support services has increased over recent years, suggesting that generally the need for support to prevent homelessness and live independently is also increasing.

Whilst improvements to gateway processes and increased provision will play a part in increased numbers being supported, the level of support needs are also significant. The majority of households have more than 1 support need, whilst up to 45% of individuals supported have at least 2 support needs.

Households are presenting with housing related support needs, across all tenures of accommodation.

➤ **There is limited availability of affordable accommodation**

Analysis shows that there is limited availability of accommodation in both the private and social rent sectors, with average private rent costs soaring way above Local Housing Allowance rates and social housing stock not being available to meet increasing demands on the Common Housing Register.

A lack of affordable accommodation in itself has likely had an impact on the demand for homelessness and housing support services as households find it harder to resolve situations themselves, before turning to the Council for support. Equally it is harder for those in temporary accommodation settings to move on.

4.0 Stakeholder Engagement Homeless Review

4.1 Stakeholders Engagement Process

A wide range of stakeholders, operating across the County Borough of Bridgend were engaged as a key part of the Homeless Review process and the development of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2022-2026.

A wide range of semi-structured individual and group interviews were undertaken with; the front line Housing Solutions, Rehousing and Commissioning Teams (who comprise staff delivering the Housing Department's principal functions), with middle tier managers with operational oversight of and responsibility for service delivery and oversight of and responsibility for service review, scrutiny, development and commissioning. Also with senior managers who hold the strategic remit for all housing functions and duties across the Authority and also with a local Elected Member, who is also a Cabinet Member.

These interviews were complimented with face to face and telephone semi-structured interviews with a wider range of operational and strategic partners drawn from other Directorates within BCBC, as well as widely from across the statutory and voluntary sectors. Again these interviewees have ranged from front line support staff, through to project managers and those with key strategic responsibility and oversight for service design, delivery, function and evaluation.

A number of face to face and phone interviews were undertaken with service users who have used BCBC's front line housing services which provided direct feedback and an appraisal of the Housing Department's functions, effectiveness and impact, as viewed from a customer perspective.

Finally, wide reaching feedback was also gathered through use of the Survey Monkey online tool, in which questions were asked of stakeholders operating at a strategic and operational level in organisations drawn from across the statutory and voluntary sectors in Bridgend.

Through at least one of the above methods the following organisations have been engaged with:

- Bridgend County Borough Council Housing Solutions & Housing Strategy Team

- Bridgend County Borough Council Senior Management & Cabinet Member for Well-being and Future Generations
- National Probation Service and members of Bridgend MAPPA planning group
- South Wales Police
- V2C Housing Association
- Linc Cymru Housing Association
- Wales & West Housing Association
- Hafod Housing Association
- Bridgend County Borough Council Social Services (both Adult and Children's Services Teams)
- Bridgend County Borough Council Prevention and Wellbeing Team
- Bridgend County Borough Council Education and Family Support Team
- Members of Bridgend Community Safety Partnership
- Bridgend VAWDASV Partnership and members of Bridgend MARAC
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board
- Individuals with lived experience
- The six service providers commissioned by BCBC through the Housing Support Grant funding programme
- Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations
- Bridgend Citizen's Advice Bureau

4.2 Stakeholder Feedback

The feedback gathered from the stakeholders listed above has been invaluable in adding narrative to the Needs Assessment and ultimately developing the Strategic Priorities set out in this strategy. Key messages from the feedback provided are set out below:

From Service Users:

- More hostels with staff providing support was requested, and a problem with the supply of suitable (temporary and permanent) accommodation was identified as a consistent theme.
- Those leaving prison wanted to see better links between prisons and housing officers, as feedback from service users painted a disjointed picture between key agencies working with those being made or facing homelessness on release from prison. Consistent experiences were of planning around addressing housing needs being left until the day of release.
- Some service users felt that communication between them and Housing Department could be better and that those who had waited longest should be prioritised for housing.
- Some service users felt that the 'homeless to housing' process could be quicker, although none were specific about what a shorter timeline could and should look like. Equally, timescales varied for individuals interviewed, from a couple of weeks in the application process to a number of months in other cases. The majority of interviewees understood the impact that Covid had on this.

From professionals across the statutory and voluntary sectors:

- Housing Department staff demonstrated a clear motivation and commitment to their jobs, but staff turnover, recruitment issues and the subsequent use of agency staff have added considerable pressure during a period of unprecedented demand on services (during the Covid pandemic).
- Stakeholders recognised the demands placed on the Housing Department throughout the pandemic, but they wanted Housing Solutions advisors to have a broader knowledge and skill set for working with service users with diverse, and complex needs and of the impact of trauma.
- Housing staff and external stakeholders wanted to establish pathways that supported earlier planning and intervention that prevented homelessness and avoided crisis case management. This was most evident for young people leaving care and those leaving the secure estate.
- The new online Jigsaw application system had been invaluable in managing demand throughout the pandemic as housing staff adopted to new ways of working. However, service users, researchers and professionals described difficulties in using the system. Improvements were also needed to ensure Housing Solutions advisors could store and retrieve information with greater ease.
- Stakeholders acknowledged that more traditional methods of engagement, such as face to face work with service users is still needed by some people. However, the pandemic has equally shown that many people prefer more remote and flexible methods of support, such as video-call, text messaging and email.
- Stakeholders described the difficulties that some service users experienced with the application and assessment process being conducted online and over the phone and requested a better balance from Housing Solutions advisors with regard to offering face to face assessments.
- There was recognition that across Directorates within the Authority there is a need to develop a better understanding of each other's priorities, pressures and limitations. This could pave the way for developing better pathways, joint working practices and establishing clear expectations of each other's roles.
- From staff across BCBC there was an acknowledgement that there was a significant opportunity for greater collaboration at a strategic level and the development of a joint commissioning strategy, using joint resources and needs analysis to better inform planning and service development.
- A range of stakeholders felt that more could be done within BCBC Education Services and with the core school curriculum to develop children's wider life skills that contribute

to primary prevention and equip and prepare children in identifying and addressing housing related issues that can lead to homelessness.

- A number of stakeholders spoke highly of the amount and variety of supported accommodation available within the Borough, but many felt more was needed to ensure options were available so that service users were placed in suitable accommodation. This was most evident for young people leaving care, those with mental health needs, more complex needs, and for people whose needs were of a more persistent nature requiring longer term and for those requiring assistance from 'wet' accommodation and support.
- Many stakeholders commented on a lack of sufficient mental health provision, both in respect of supported accommodation provision and in relation to access to and provision of statutory mental health services.
- Evidence reviewed illustrates that individuals and households accessing homelessness services are presenting with increasing and often multi-faceted support needs. Co-terminus with this there is developing challenges across the provider sector in meeting demand from, and the needs of, those with substance use issues who present with risk behaviour management issues. Increased models of intensive and longer term supported accommodation, for example a 'wet house' or static type housing first service, are examples of how this need could potentially be met.
- Third Sector providers and agencies operating within the public protection and safeguarding arena described joint working with the Housing Department as very good. However, Housing Department staff consistently noted the need for better provision of information sharing and adoption of risk management procedures from Probation and mental health services, as specific examples.
- Homeless Cell meetings and the multi-agency approach adopted between the assertive outreach service, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Complex Needs Outreach Team allied to the range of 'bricks and mortar' accommodation services in meeting the needs of rough sleepers were described as being 'gold standard'.
- The demands on temporary accommodation were noted as presenting a significant challenge, in respect of cost, availability and suitability to the needs of service users. The provision and use of temporary accommodation provision should be reviewed, in line with a Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan.
- The shift to Rapid Rehousing due to the pandemic was recognised for its effectiveness in driving a coordinated approach to moving people on from temporary accommodation. However, balance was requested to ensure people were also moved on from supported accommodation, with concerns being raised at the length of a person's stay becoming potentially detrimental to their longer term wellbeing.

- RSLs were keen to establish reciprocal agreements that formalised the flexible way they work with each other. There was recognition of the need to review the Social Housing Allocation Policy in light of the permanent transition to Rapid Rehousing, the Common Housing Register, and in meeting the needs of Housing First service users.
- All stakeholders recognised the limited amount of affordable and suitable accommodation across all sectors. There was broad consensus that increased affordable stock across both the social and private housing sectors is vital in preventing and relieving homelessness.
- The level of voids within and among RSL partners was highlighted as being a serious concern, especially whilst such a significant number of people are currently being accommodated by Bridgend CBC in temporary accommodation.
- There are opportunities to utilise a number of funding streams (Housing Support Grant and Social Housing Grant), to respond to these challenges and to develop varied support models. However, despite recent increases in Social Housing Grant, the multi-faceted nature of capital build programmes continued to present challenges in building new homes. Furthermore, innovative responses are needed to tackle the challenges faced in increasing the supply of private sector properties available to the Authority.
- Support providers value and requested consideration be given to reinstating the Providers Forum, as the move towards the 'new normal' continues, following the Covid 19 pandemic.
- The Homeless Cell and Rapid Rehousing Panel meetings developed as part of Bridgend CBC's homelessness response to the Covid 19 panel are well valued, but there were calls for reviewing the latter in light of the permanent shift towards Rapid Rehousing.
- Partner organisations should ensure steps are taken within their own organisations to support the homelessness agenda, in acknowledgement that homelessness is a cross cutting issue and cannot be tackled by one organisation alone.
- Housing related support services need to continue to be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure the continued provision of high quality services, that there are opportunities to identify gaps in provision, and to develop greater insight as to what works and doesn't work when preventing and relieving homelessness.
- The Housing Department's roles, structure, processes, and training and support should be reviewed to ensure resources, pathways, communication, and consistent wellbeing support to all staff promote more effective and valued service delivery.
- There was broad recognition that there were insufficient opportunities and mechanisms in place to involve people with lived experience in the design, and evaluation of services.

- There is opportunity for the Housing Department to develop and embed a more psychologically informed culture and service offer through embracing the Trauma Informed Practice and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE 2.0) framework in its commissioning, service delivery and monitoring.
- A common theme from stakeholders was the need to provide more information to the public with regard to the causes, consequences and opportunities to help in tackling homelessness.

Public consultation

Following Cabinet approval of a draft strategy in July 2023 a public consultation was undertaken, between 20th July 2023 and 12th October 2023. 33 responses were received, as well as comments from the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate of the Council.

In addition, the draft strategy was presented to the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on 25 September 2023 for consideration and comment. As per a recommendation from the Committee, engagement was also subsequently held with the Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer.

All of the comments and recommendations from the above have been considered as part of finalising this Housing Support Programme Strategy.

5.0 Strategic Priorities

The Local Authority has developed the following strategic priorities, which are set with the ambition of delivering our vision for homelessness and housing related support services. These strategic priorities have been developed following the development of our Statement of Need and stakeholder engagement, as well as national and local legislation and policy.

| Strategic Priority | Rationale | Objectives |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Increase the supply of suitable accommodation to meet the housing needs of applicants | <p>The stark shortage of suitable housing is the biggest challenge the Local Authority faces, with demand significantly outweighing supply.</p> <p>Homelessness applications and demand to the Common Housing Register have consistently increased over a period of time.</p> <p>The current supply of social housing through RSL partners is insufficient to meet demands.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply of suitable social housing, which is available to meet local need. • Increase the availability of suitable private rent sector properties. • Promote and encourage the leasing or rental of private sector properties and the continued |

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| | <p>The availability of affordable private rent sector accommodation is low, with market rents outstripping Local Housing Allowance rates.</p> | <p>engagement of Private Rented Sector landlords.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with RSL partners to ensure the best use of current stock to meet local need. |
| <p>2. To implement a Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan</p> | <p>The Welsh Government has set expectations for Local Authorities to develop and implement a Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan.</p> <p>A Rapid Rehousing model is intended to support prevention and mitigate the impact of homelessness on households. Successful delivery will be key to managing the impact of increasing demands on homelessness services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work in partnership with stakeholders to implement the various elements as set out in the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan. • To prevent homelessness and the need for temporary accommodation. • To reduce the need for temporary accommodation and where needed to reduce the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation • To develop a model based on robust data, with clear evidence of need. |
| <p>3. Provide an accessible, flexible and responsive service to meet needs, through a skilled and valued workforce</p> | <p>There is a need for continuous improvements to be made to the accessibility of services, ensuring a flexible approach to identified need.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for existing Gateway functions to play a greater role in establishing better pathways, monitoring throughput and performance.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that services are accessible to all and response to those with additional needs • Extend and enhance the function and impact of the Gateway. • Improve ongoing engagement with those with lived experience. |

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| | <p>People with lived experience should have a meaningful and impactful role in the development and monitoring of services.</p> <p>Better communication and promotion of homelessness prevention services could promote engagement at an earlier stage.</p> <p>There is an acknowledgement that through increased demands and complexity of work there are additional pressures on the workforce, which need to be resolved.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear process and pathway information and raise the profile of current homelessness advice and support services, to encourage take up by individuals in housing need • Ensure sufficient capacity within the workforce to meet presenting demand. • Deliver services through a resilient and skilled workforce, which provides high quality provision and promotes staff wellbeing. |
| <p>4. To improve collaboration with key stakeholders at a strategic level to improve homelessness prevention</p> | <p>Homelessness is not just a housing issue. Collaboration and partnerships with wider stakeholders have a key role to the successful prevention of homelessness.</p> <p>Improved understanding of wider pressures, priorities and limitations can lead to closer joint working and improved outcomes for individuals.</p> <p>A culture of joint shared ownership can improve, planning and commissioning, as well as supporting risk management.</p> <p>Better collaboration can improve corporate priorities, such as implementing the national care leavers and accommodation and support framework.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in wider stakeholder ownership of homelessness to support upstream prevention. • Increased sharing of data to identify gaps, with the potential for increased jointly commissioned services. • Establish an organisational culture of enquiry where data analysis and interpretation effectively inform service delivery. • To manage risk through stakeholders coming together to find joint solutions and outcomes |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with regional partners to explore opportunities for service provision, which meets common needs. • To work with partners, including Social Services colleagues to implement the national care leavers accommodation and support framework. • To explore a range of good quality housing choices for young people and care leavers, which promotes independence, prolonged health and well-being. • Improve joint working across housing and social services, utilising corporate parenting responsibilities to further understand the reasons as to why care leavers present as homeless and what action can be taken to prevent such presentations. |
| <p>5. Enhance and increase the services for those with complex needs</p> | <p>The support needs of those presenting as homeless are significant. Often housing alone cannot address underlying issues preventing someone from securing or maintaining accommodation.</p> <p>There are a cohort of individuals who require intensive support models. These cases are often resource intensive to a range of public services</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop services that can effectively support people with highly complex and possibly enduring needs. • Take a multi-agency approach to supporting those with complex needs. • Work with partners, including social services to prevent homelessness for |

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| | | those with complex needs and or lifelong conditions, such as learning difficulties, mental health or neurodiverse conditions. |
| 6. Take an assertive, collaborative and multi-disciplined approach to support rough sleepers | <p>Rough sleeping is the sharp end and harshest form of homelessness. The vulnerability and risk posed to rough sleepers is often significant.</p> <p>The reasons as to why people sleep rough are often complex and deep rooted. As such relieving the homelessness of rough sleepers can be challenging and requires resource and multi-agency involvement.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep the number of rough sleepers low and ensure that where rough sleeping does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurring. • To provide assertive outreach to assist in the accurate identification of and support to rough sleepers • To ensure a multi-agency approach to supporting rough sleeping. |

6.0 Impact Assessments

6.1 Impact Assessment Process

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed at 'screening stage'.

6.2 Key Findings

The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the development of this strategy.

As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7.0 Implementing, Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy

7.1 Working with Partners

The Local Authority cannot effectively implement the priorities in this Strategy alone. Collaboratively working with key partners such as health, social care and criminal justice is vital in order to deliver and optimise the impact of our priorities outlined within the strategy.

We will work collaboratively to implement our Strategy by:

- Ensuring that work is undertaken to develop and improve approaches to collaborative working across Directorates within Bridgend CBC and to ensure that this approach is matched with similar approaches to collaborative and joint working with stakeholders outside the Authority.
- Making best use of the existing strategic and operational relationships across services and sectors in Bridgend that are well founded, long standing, creative and innovative in nature and responsiveness to need. There is a clear synergy in how services interlink across the sector and dovetail with assisting the Authority in meeting wider strategic initiatives.
- Ensuring at an operational level that the Authority builds on the clear evidence of Housing Department staff making frequent and good use of the expertise and experience from other stakeholders and providers brought in to address complex needs achieving positive outcomes for services users.
- Continuing multi-agency and partnership working at an operational level, which was evidenced as being a clear strength of the Housing Department. This approach and practice provide a template for the Authority to deliver on and optimise the impact of the Homelessness Strategy, through a model of joint working with Social Services, Probation and Mental Health services.
- Ensuring that the working relationship with Health continues, as evidenced in the development of the Regional Complex Needs Outreach Team. Contributing to further work with Health Services that has a broader focus for non-medical/clinical issues. The sharing of budgets and joint commissioning could promote more joined up thinking to address overlapping health and community support issues.
- Considering developing relationships and multi-agency working between the Housing Department and other partners through the co-location of services or expertise in a central Hub.
- Establishing focused and appropriate forums, by considering the purpose, membership, and frequency of all current, past and future meetings to ensure appropriate stakeholders are engaged in the forum/meetings most relevant to their roles and functions.

7.2 Funding Sources

Our vision and priorities within this strategy will be funded from grant allocations from the Welsh Government (WG), as well as core internal funding sources where appropriate.

The Housing Support Grant (HSG) will be the main funding stream used to meet our priorities as set out in the strategy.

The Housing Support Grant allocation for Bridgend Council is as follows:

2022-23 - £7,833,509.33

2023-24 - £7,833,509.33

2024-25 - £7,833,509.33

Other applicable grants include the Social Housing Grant and the No One Left Out Grant. Our ambition is to work in collaboration with our partners such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ensure we jointly utilise all available funding sources to ensure we deliver on jointly agreed priorities. To meet the significant increase in temporary accommodation costs, identified BCBC core funding has been and will be required to meet ongoing demands.

7.3 Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluation Arrangements

Our strategic priorities will be communicated to partners in order to be implemented effectively. A two pronged, qualitative and quantitative approach to monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan will be adopted.

This will take the form of a RAG traffic light assessment and review process linked up to:

1. BCBC giving due consideration to consulting with stakeholders and partners via an annual update and review using a narrative assessment of performance against priorities and objectives.
2. Consideration being given to engaging with service users through an annual review process, either through existing service user involvement processes utilised by partners and stakeholders, or through the use of an online Survey Monkey style anonymised questionnaire.
3. Identifying tangible KPIs, actions and outputs as detailed in the strategy and/or its action plan and conducting a quantitative assessment conducted at key milestones.

This could be developed into a more comprehensive annual review and report, which again could be disseminated among stakeholders, through existing strategic meeting structures.

Bridgend County Borough Council

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

www.bridgend.gov.uk



Bridgend County Borough Council Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26

Action Plan

Our Housing Support Programme Strategy sets out the Council's strategic direction for delivering homelessness and housing related support services, between 2022 and 2026.

The Strategy sets out six Strategic Priorities, with associated objectives. The six Strategic Priorities are:

Strategic Priority 1: Increase the supply of suitable accommodation to meet the housing needs of applicants

Strategic Priority 2: To implement a Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan

Strategic Priority 3: Provide an accessible, flexible and responsive service to meet needs, through a skilled and valued workforce

Strategic Priority 4: To improve collaboration with key stakeholders at a strategic level to improve homelessness prevention

Strategic Priority 5: Enhance and increase the services for those with complex needs

Strategic Priority 6: Take an assertive, collaborative and multi-disciplined approach to support rough sleepers

This Action Plan sets out each Strategic Priority and sets specific actions which will be taken forward, with the aim of achieving the priorities and objectives set out.

| Strategic Priority 1: Increase the supply of suitable accommodation to meet the housing needs of applicants | | | |
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| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Target Timescale |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply of suitable social housing, which is available to meet local need. • Increase the availability of suitable private rent sector properties. • Promote and encourage the leasing or rental of private sector properties and the continued engagement of Private Rented Sector landlords. • Work with RSL partners to ensure the best use of current stock to meet local need. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with RSL's to utilise capital income streams, such as the Social Housing Grant to increase suitable social housing stock. | BCBC, RSL's | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible to work with RSL's to repurpose existing stock to best meet local need. | BCBC, RSL's | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise available funding streams, including Empty Property Grants to bring Empty Properties back into use. | BCBC, Private Sector Landlords | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue and expand on the delivery of a private rent leasing service. | BCBC, Private Sector Landlords | New Leasing Scheme to be adopted by April 2024 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore schemes which incentivise private sector landlords to make their stock available for use to prevent and relieve homelessness. | BCBC, Private Sector Landlords | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rekindle a local private landlord forum. | BCBC, Private Sector Landlords | July 2025 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue ongoing engagement with RSL's through operational and strategic meetings. | BCBC, RSL's | Ongoing |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop bespoke solutions to meet identified housing needs of those homeless or threatened with homelessness. • To explore new ownership models for affordable housing. | BCBC, RSL's | Ongoing |
| | | BCBC | Ongoing |

| Strategic Priority 2: To implement a Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan | | | |
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| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timescale (Short term <1 year, Medium term 1-2 years, Long term >3 years) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work in partnership with stakeholders to implement the various elements as set out in the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan. • To prevent homelessness and the need for temporary accommodation. • To reduce the need for temporary accommodation and where needed to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a 5 year Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan and ensure that its purpose and role in supporting homelessness is clearly understood by all stakeholders and partners | BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers | Plan to be adopted by December 2023 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review, Appraise and amend if required the Councils Social Housing Allocation Policy, taking into consideration the views of key stakeholders. | BCBC, RSL's | New SHAP to be in place by December 2025 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a programme of monitoring and review is maintained to ensure current housing related support provision is fit for purpose and in line with BCBC's Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan. | BCBC | Ongoing |

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| <p>reduce the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a model based on robust data, with clear evidence of need. | <p>Consider re purposing or re modelling provision, if required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and agree key data sets, which are frequently monitored and that can inform strategic planning. Take forward the priorities and actions as set out in the Plan. To explore longer term solutions to temporary accommodation including direct ownership by BCBC. | <p>BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers</p> | <p>December 2025</p> |
| | | <p>BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers, Private Sector Landlords</p> | <p>December 2025</p> |
| | | <p>BCBC</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |

| <p>Strategic Priority 3: Provide an accessible, flexible and responsive service to meet needs, through a skilled and valued workforce</p> | | | |
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| <p>Objective</p> | <p>Action</p> | <p>Responsibility</p> | <p>Timescale (Short term <1 year, Medium term 1-2 years, Long term >3 years)</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that services are accessible to all and response to those with additional needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and enhance the operational elements of the Housing Support Gateway, including exploring the possibility for a tailored case management system. | <p>BCBC</p> | <p>October 2025</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend and enhance the function and impact of the Gateway.• Improve ongoing engagement with those with lived experience.• Provide clear process and pathway information and raise the profile of current homelessness advice and support services, to encourage take up by individuals in housing need• Ensure sufficient capacity within the workforce to meet presenting demand.• Deliver services through a resilient and skilled workforce, which provides high quality provision and promotes staff wellbeing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure engagement with those with lived experience as part of ongoing monitoring and commissioning exercises for homelessness and housing support services.• Make further enhancements to the housing Jigsaw system to ensure it meets the operational needs of the service and service user.• Ensure staff of both internal and commissioned services receive adequate training and support.• Regularly review staffing structures to ensure sufficient capacity to meet ongoing demand. | BCBC, Commissioned Providers BCBC BCBC, Commissioned Providers BCBC, Commissioned Providers | Ongoing December 2025 Ongoing Ongoing |
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| Strategic Priority 4: To improve collaboration with key stakeholders at a strategic level to improve homelessness prevention | | | |
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| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timescale (Short term <1 year, Medium term 1-2 years, Long term >3 years) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in wider stakeholder ownership of homelessness to support upstream prevention. • Increased sharing of data to identify gaps, with the potential for increased jointly commissioned services. • Establish an organisational culture of enquiry where data analysis and interpretation effectively informs service delivery. • To manage risk through stakeholders coming together to find joint solutions and outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for Bridgend Joint Commissioning, where appropriate. | BCBC, Other Statutory Services | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and agree key data sets with partner organisations which can inform performance management and monitoring that can inform future strategic planning. | BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers, Other Statutory Services | December 2024 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and meet with appropriate representatives to discuss a fresh approach to strategic level collaboration and agree key personnel and the frequency and format of future meetings. | BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers, Other Statutory Services | December 2024 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore a multi-disciplinary approach for services that meet the needs of children and young people. | BCBC, Commissioned Providers | December 2024 |

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| can be taken to prevent such presentations. | | | |
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| Strategic Priority 5: Enhance and increase the services for those with complex needs | | | |
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| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timescale (Short term <1 year, Medium term 1-2 years, Long term >3 years) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop services that can effectively support people with highly complex and possibly enduring needs. Take a multi-agency approach to supporting those with complex needs. Work with partners, including social services to prevent homelessness for those with complex needs and or lifelong conditions, such as learning difficulties, mental health or neurodiverse conditions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take an evidenced based approach to identify gaps in service provision building an understanding of the multi-agency response required to respond to needs for this client group. | BCBC, Support Providers, Other Statutory Services | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build on the current Housing First, wider complex needs provision, and assessment centre provision to increase the supply of accommodation and support services for those with complex needs. | BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the development of accommodation models, which provide specialist intensive support, including Wet House provision (long term) Build on the current commissioning practice which ensures that those with lived experience have a role in the | BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers | December 2026 ⁵ |

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| | commissioning of services based on the principles of a co-production model. | BCBC, Commissioned Providers | Ongoing |
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| Strategic Priority 6: Take an assertive, collaborative and multi-disciplined approach to support rough sleepers | | | |
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| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timescale (Short term <1 year, Medium term 1-2 years, Long term >3 years) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To keep the number of rough sleepers low and ensure that where rough sleeping does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurring. To provide assertive outreach to assist in the accurate identification of and support to rough sleepers To ensure a multi-agency approach to supporting rough sleeping. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the multi-agency Homelessness Cell meetings and support to coordinate services for identified rough sleepers. | BCBC, Support Providers, Other Statutory Services | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work proactively with partners to ensure services support an 'all in approach. | BCBC, RSL's, Commissioned Providers | Ongoing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current outreach arrangements, now funded by the Housing Support Grant. | BCBC, Commissioned Providers | April 2024 |

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| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | HYBRID WORKING POLICY |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES, HR & CORPORATE POLICY |
| Responsible Officer: | PAUL MILES, GROUP MANAGER HR & OD |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules. |
| Executive Summary: | <p>The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the reviewed Hybrid Working Policy.</p> <p>In October 2022 the Council implemented an interim Hybrid Working Policy. This policy set out a framework for hybrid working at the Council and in doing so sought to support the Council with its future service delivery model.</p> |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the reviewed Hybrid Working Policy attached as **Appendix 1**.

2. Background

- 2.1 In October 2022 the Council implemented an interim Hybrid Working Policy. This policy set out a framework for hybrid working at the Council and in doing so sought to support the Council with its future service delivery model.
- 2.2 Significant consultation took place with local trade union representatives in relation to the development of the policy.
- 2.3 Trade Union representatives, in supporting the policy, had some concerns about its practical implementation and impact on employees. It was therefore agreed to implement the policy on an interim basis in order to enable due consideration to be given to the concerns raised and to receive feedback from staff following implementation.
- 2.4 Interim application of the policy also allowed for consideration to be given to any updates on discussions that were happening at an all-Wales level on matters relating to homeworking.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The interim Hybrid Working Policy has been in place since October 2022.
- 3.2 The annual staff survey held during December 2022 and January 2023 was utilised to obtain staff feedback with a section of questions specifically addressing hybrid working.
- 3.3 Feedback from staff via the staff survey in relation to hybrid working was positive. 62% of respondents confirmed that their work roles were subject to the new interim hybrid working policy that was introduced in October 2022. 72% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied that the new interim hybrid policy supports working arrangements which enabled them to meet work demands. 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the flexitime working hours scheme and hybrid working allowed them to achieve a good work life balance.
- 3.4 Following this feedback, a dedicated meeting was held with trade union representatives to discuss and obtain their reflections. Trade union representatives confirmed that the feedback from the staff survey reflected the feedback which they had received from staff. No further amendments to the policy were recommended.
- 3.5 Trade Union representatives confirmed that the Council could seek to adopt this interim policy on a permanent basis.
- 3.6 The policy has been shared with Corporate Management Board (CMB) and Cabinet/CMB (CCMB).
- 3.7 In terms of discussions that are happening at an all-Wales level on matters relating to homeworking, the National Joint Council provided a commitment that employers should provide guidance on home working within the 2022 pay agreement. The Council's interim Hybrid Working Policy met this requirement.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no climate change implications as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications as a result of this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report..

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Hybrid Working Policy for full implementation.

Background Documents

None

HYBRID WORKING POLICY

SCOPE STATEMENT

This Policy applies to all employees of Bridgend County Borough Council except:

- Those employed under the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales.
- Those employed by Governing Bodies in educational establishments under delegated powers.

Date of Issue:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| DOCUMENT CONTROL | |
| Document Title | Hybrid Working Policy |
| Previous Publication Date | 31 October 2022 |
| DOCUMENT APPROVAL | |
| This document received approval from: | Date |
| Group Manager HR & OD | 02/05/2023 |
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| Corporate Management Board | |
| CCMB | |
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| REVISION HISTORY | |
| Revision History | |

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020 led to the council having to adapt and deliver many services virtually with employees often working remotely from their homes. Whilst not all services were impacted in this way, with some employees continuing throughout to work full time from service delivery locations, these experiences created an opportunity to review the council's operating model with a view to ensuring that the council is fit for purpose moving forward.
- 1.2. A hybrid working model offers a blended approach that can take account of the wide range of services delivered by the council. The application of hybrid working is dependent on the demands and needs of the role undertaken by the employee and the service within which the role is based. It also offers employees greater flexibility in their work practices, promoting a better work life balance.
- 1.3. This policy has been developed alongside the Flexitime Working Hours Scheme.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. The council is committed to a model of service delivery which ensures the provision of customer centric and IT enabled services across the County Borough, contributing to the council's digitalisation strategy of enabling a Digital Council by 2024.
- 2.2. The council is committed to improving the work environment of employees by enabling greater flexibility in relation to remote working. This will enhance work life balance and staff wellbeing and have a positive impact on the council's ability to recruit and retain staff.
- 2.3. The council is seeking to align its hybrid working model with the Welsh Government goal of achieving as a minimum 30% of workforce being agile and working from home at any given point by 2024.
- 2.4. The council is expecting the application of a hybrid working model to make a positive contribution to the net carbon 2030 agenda by reducing the need to travel to work.

3. General Principles

3.1. Service delivery led:

The council's model should be directed by its ability to deliver effective services across the County Borough demonstrating benefit to the council and its customers.

3.2. One administrative base:

Civic Offices to be retained as the main administrative and democratic base for the council for the foreseeable future. In due course a rationalisation of other office buildings may be possible.

3.3. Blended models of working:

The model will recognise the wide range of services delivered by the council. Some employees may need to work full time from service delivery locations whilst for others a hybrid agile model of office and remote working would be suitable. This must be service led whilst enabling employees to have greater flexibility in their work practices and promote better work life balance.

3.4. Contract of employment:

Application of this policy does not affect current terms and conditions of employment.

4. Hybrid Working Arrangements

4.1. Agreeing a hybrid working arrangement will not result in any changes to an employee's contract of employment.

4.2. The number of days an employee will be expected to attend their usual base compared with working remotely will vary depending on: the needs of the organisation, the needs of the service they work in, the nature of their role, what is happening within their role and team at any time and individual circumstances.

4.3. Employees can be asked to attend the workplace for several reasons including:

4.3.1. to support front-line service delivery,

4.3.2. to attend meetings best conducted in person such as appraisals, supervision, induction, other management meetings,

4.3.3. operational reasons such as undertaking tasks that are better done at the workplace,

4.3.4. in-person training or team days where teams come together for meetings, team development and wellbeing purposes.

4.4. Working arrangements should suit the needs of the service and must be discussed and agreed with the service manager. All decisions should be made in a fair and consistent manner.

4.5. Managers should consider trialling arrangements for a period for employees and/or teams to see how the new working arrangements operate in practice. If required advice can be sought from the HR Business Partner team.

4.6. Hybrid working arrangements will need to adapt to changing service needs and circumstances.

4.7. For changes to any other aspect of work e.g., reducing working hours, employees should use the Flexible Working Policy.

4.8. Location

An employee's contractual base remains unchanged as set out in their written statement of particulars. Within the hybrid approach work locations can vary depending on an employee's work and service demands; for example, an employee may work in one, or a range of buildings for part of their working week and work from home for the rest of their working week.

4.9. Working hours

Employees are required to work their contracted hours e.g., 37 hours per week if full-time and will have to be available during these hours whether working remotely or from the workplace.

Employees who utilise the Flexitime Working Hours Scheme should be mindful of meeting service opening hours and cover requirements as agreed with the manager.

4.10. ICT & Equipment

As part of hybrid working employees will be provided with relevant ICT equipment. All employees must complete a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment which will identify any additional equipment required.

Equipment provided by BCBC must be used for work-related purposes and must not be used by anyone else at any time. Employees are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure the safety and security of council equipment in their possession.

Employees will need to arrange their own broadband provision at their own cost when working from home. The broadband specification should be sufficient for an employee to undertake their role.

All systems and devices must be used in compliance with the ICT Code of Conduct, further information can be found by visiting the ICT pages on the intranet.

4.11. GDPR/confidentiality/data security

Household members should not be able to access BCBC equipment, see documents or overhear conversations. Headphones which can be accessed on request, will assist maintaining confidentiality whilst working at home or in the office. Employees should keep any BCBC documents at home safely until they are able to discard or store them confidentially at BCBC offices.

4.12. Printing

As the council seeks to reduce reliance on paper, the printing of any documents should be done as a last resort. Employees can access secure printers at Civic Offices. At home, employees will be able to send print jobs to a secure printer located in one of the council buildings and collect at their convenience. Employees

connecting their own printers to their home working setup is not permitted. Further information on printing can be found by visiting the ICT pages on the intranet.

4.13. Telephone

The council's telephony software, currently Cisco Jabber, must be active on all laptops for the purpose of incoming and outgoing calls. Employees have an extension number and a direct dial number on their laptop. Employees are then able to make and receive internal and external calls from their laptop. Hunt groups work through the laptops in the same way as in the office.

The council's current video calling software, Microsoft Teams is the standard method of making and receiving calls between staff members. Both voice and video calls can be made in this way. Calls to partner and external organisations (such as neighbouring Authorities, the NHS, WG etc) can also be made via Microsoft Teams. One of the authorised BCBC backgrounds should be used for video calls. Further guidance on how to use Teams can be found on the intranet.

For staff who are community based, lone-work or who need to make and receive calls and be contactable out of hours, a Smart Mobile Phone is available. BCBC provided smartphones have access to some systems such as Outlook for business email.

4.14. Insurance

Employees should check with their home and contents insurance provider that they have adequate cover for the fact that they work from home and that any of their own equipment is covered for work use.

4.15. Rental agreements

Employees are responsible for checking applicable rental agreements to ensure they are permitted to work from home, and for obtaining any permissions necessary to work from home.

4.16. Working safely

BCBC, as an employer has a legal and moral duty to ensure that work is undertaken in a healthy and safe way. The responsibilities outlined in the corporate health and safety policy apply, wherever work is being undertaken. Specific areas to consider include:

- Lone working / personal safety; Employees should agree a procedure with their manager to ensure that whilst working remotely, their location is known by their manager and colleagues, this could include updating calendars, implementing buddy systems, or using lone working systems depending on the risk assessments for the activities undertaken.
- Accidents / incidents; All accidents and incidents including near misses need to be reported. Any actions to prevent re-occurrence need to be discussed and where required an investigation by the health and safety team will be undertaken.

- Workstation set up and Display Screen Equipment (DSE); Setting up a workstation correctly at any location is equally as important as when an employee is in the office, and the same principles apply. A good workstation setup reduces the effects of poor posture on the body and prevents musculoskeletal injuries e.g., muscle fatigue, tension, strain, cramps.
- Fire and First Aid Arrangements: Employees should make sure that they are aware of the fire evacuation procedures for the office / premises from which they work. Information will be available on the first aid provision within the office / premises as well. If unsure, employees should ask their line manager for further advice.
- Management and staff reporting processes continue to apply and form an important part of hybrid working arrangements.
- Further advice in relation to working safely from home and the office is available from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

4.17. Travel Expenses

Travel expenses are in-line with the council's expenses policy and procedure. Mileage is not paid for travel from home to work / work to home.

However, where travel from home to a different location and/or the return journey occurs, mileage in excess of the normal home / work journey will be reimbursed. For more information you can read the council's [expenses policy and procedure](#).

4.18. Employee Wellbeing

A range of resources are available to support the wellbeing of all staff. Full details are available on the [Wellbeing pages](#).

Employees are encouraged to ensure that they take appropriate breaks and keep well hydrated when remote working. The daily [Employee Wellbeing Checklist](#) can be used to assist employees in formulating a schedule to maintain a healthy routine.

In addition, several learning opportunities are available to employees and managers. Full details can be found on the [Learning and Development](#) website.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Employee responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy in a reasonable, constructive, and appropriate manner.
- Being flexible and open in discussing and agreeing hybrid working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of service.
- Maintaining regular contact with their manager.
- Working as agreed and abiding by all the council policies (available on the intranet) whilst working in this way.

- Complying with health and safety policy and procedures by informing management of any significant risks that need to be addressed, participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety.
- Complying with confidentiality, data protection and information security policies.
- Ensuring that all reasonable care is taken of all council supplied ICT equipment.
- Reporting immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to council ICT equipment or the loss of confidential information.
- Consulting with any necessary parties, such as landlords and insurance companies, regarding home working.

5.2. Management responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring employees are aware of all relevant policies and procedures.
- Ensuring flexibility, transparency, and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about hybrid working with employees within their area of responsibility, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service.
- Ensuring good communication with employees and agreeing clear communication lines and methods.
- Arranging individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members.
- Providing support for employees and implementing ways of measuring and monitoring work output that have been mutually agreed.
- Setting and monitoring defined performance measures in line with the council's performance framework e.g., appraisals, 1 to 1 supervision meetings.
- Allowing employees who are using their homes to work from to have a right to privacy outside of working hours and the ability to separate their working and home lives.
- Meeting their duties in relation to health and safety and welfare by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for employees for whom they are responsible.
- Undertaking a regular review of the hybrid working arrangements for their service area.

5.3. Human Resources

Human Resources are responsible for:

- Providing support and advice to managers on the application of the policy.
- Providing advice to employees on the policy and support that is available.
- Reviewing the application of the policy and procedures considering operational experience.
- Taking account of good practice and national guidance.

- Identifying any learning and development needs as a result of the application of this policy.
- Developing and promoting employee wellbeing resources.

5.4. Union Representatives

Union representatives are responsible for:

- Working with employees, managers, and Human Resources in a constructive, flexible, and open manner in the application of this policy.
- Providing advice and support to employees.
- Participating in the monitoring and review of the policy.

6. Monitor and Review

- 6.1** This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review timetable or sooner if there is a need, or due to any legislative changes.
- 6.2** Employees should familiarise themselves with other council policies which include:
- [Flexible Working Scheme](#)
 - [ICT Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Display Screen Equipment \(DSE\)](#)
 - [Lone Working Guidance](#)
 - [Absence Management Policy](#)
 - [Domestic Abuse, Violence Against Women and Sexual Violence Protocol.](#)
 - [Employee Health & Wellbeing Protocol](#)
 - [Corporate Health & Safety Policy and guidance](#)

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| | |
|--|---|
| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | INFORMATION REPORT FOR NOTING |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY |
| Responsible Officer: | MICHAEL PITMAN – TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER DEMOCRATIC SERVICES |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules. |
| Executive Summary: | To update Cabinet with a report for Members information and noting on the Regulation Of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the Information Report for noting that has been published since its last scheduled meeting.

2. Background

- 2.1 At a previous meeting of Council, it was resolved to approve a revised procedure for the presentation to Council of Information Reports for noting.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Information Report

The following Information Report has been published since the last meeting of Council:-

| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date Published</u> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Regulation Of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 | 19 December 2023 |

3.2 Availability of Document

The document has been circulated to Elected Members electronically via

email and placed on the Bridgend County Borough Council website. The document is available from the above date of publication.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no Climate Change Implications from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 That Cabinet acknowledges the publication of the report referred to in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

Background documents

None

| | |
|--|--|
| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 DECEMBER 2023 |
| Report Title: | REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | MONITORING OFFICER |
| Responsible Officer: | LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules. |
| Executive Summary: | To provide details of the current policy under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the use of RIPA within the Authority. |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details of the current policy under the Regulation and Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

2. Background

- 2.1 RIPA provides a framework for certain public bodies, including local authorities, to use covert surveillance to gather information about individuals without their knowledge for the purposes of undertaking statutory functions in connection with the prevention and detection of crime.

- 2.2 For local authorities, the only ground for authorisation is for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime which:

- (a) constitutes one or more criminal offences, or
- (b) is, or corresponds to, any conduct which, if it all took place in England and Wales, would constitute one or more criminal offences.

And the criminal offence or one of the criminal offences is or would be-

- (a) an offence which is punishable, whether on summary conviction or on indictment, by a maximum term of at least 6 months of imprisonment, or
- (b) an offence under:
 - section 146 of the Licensing Act 2003 (sale of alcohol to children);
 - section 147 of the Licensing Act 2003 (allowing the sale of alcohol to children);

- section 147A of the Licensing Act 2003 (persistently selling alcohol to children);
- section 7 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (sale of tobacco, etc, to persons under eighteen).

2.3 RIPA activity and authorisations are governed by Codes of Practice and Guidance issued by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) and the Home Office.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Members are required to review the use of RIPA and set the policy at least once a year. Elected Members cannot be involved in decisions on specific authorisations, but have oversight of the process.

3.2 The Council has always been very sparing in its use of RIPA. It is only used in cases where it is important to obtain information to support potential criminal proceedings, and only where that information cannot be obtained by any other means. There have been no authorisations for RIPA since April 2014. It is clear that the general policy is that it should not be used unless absolutely necessary.

3.3 Other reasons likely to account for the reduction in the number of authorisations being sought are:

- a reduction in the number of incidents requiring investigation, and
- increased awareness of the scope of RIPA and the alternatives to covert surveillance as a result of training delivered to all Investigating and Authorising officers.

3.4 Overall responsibility for the use of RIPA lies with the Monitoring Officer who acts as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO). The policy attached as **Appendix 1** has been reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and in accordance with the Codes of Practice issued by the Home Office.

3.5 Local authorities are subject to regular inspections every three years from the IPCO, the most recent Council inspection having taken place successfully in October 2020. The SRO has been notified that the IPCO remain satisfied that our ongoing compliance with RIPA will be maintained and as such, the Council's next inspection will be in 2026. The IPCO requested that the Council ensure that the key compliance issues continue to receive the necessary internal governance and oversight through the SRO, annually update Elected Members, policy refreshes and ongoing training and awareness raising.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report and therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this

report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As the report is for information only it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the report.

Background documents:

None

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Bridgend County Borough Council

Policy on Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources under the
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

Contents

- 1 Introduction to RIPA 2000
- 2 Types of Surveillance
- 3 Authorisation of Surveillance
Necessity and Proportionality
Duration
Renewals
Cancellations
Reviews
- 4 Drive-bys
- 5 CCTV
- 6 Internet and Social Networking Sites
- 7 Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS)
- 8 Collaborative Working
- 9 Record Management
- 10 General Considerations

Appendices

- 1 Identification of Senior Responsible Officer and Designated Authorised Officers
- 2 RIPA Authorisation Flow Chart
- 3 Home Office Local Authority Procedure Flow Chart: Application to a Justice of the Peace seeking an Order to approve the grant of a RIPA Authorisation or Notice.

Introduction to RIPA 2000

- 1.1 In carrying out its duties the Council may need to conduct appropriate investigations into allegations or concerns brought to its attention and such investigations may necessarily require covert surveillance. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) provides a regulatory framework governing interception of communications, surveillance and associated activities. This is to ensure the powers are used lawfully and in a way that is compatible with Human Rights. Through the application of authorisation procedures and Magistrates Court approval it ensures that a balance is maintained between the public interest and the human rights of individuals.
- 1.2 This Policy is based upon the requirements of RIPA and Home Office's Code of Practices on Covert Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources. Copies of the Home Office's Codes of Practice are available on their website. Forms to record applications and decisions in writing are also available on the website.
- 1.3 The Council takes its statutory responsibilities seriously and will at all times ensure that any such surveillance or use of an intelligence source carried out is authorised and in accordance with the legislation. Investigations which are not authorised could leave the Council open to challenge by individuals who consider that there has been an intrusion into their privacy.
- 1.4 It is considered good practice for public authorities to appoint a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) to be made responsible for the integrity of the process in place for the management of surveillance. The current SRO for the Council is identified in **Appendix 1**. Whilst legislation does not preclude the SRO's use as an Authorising Officer, it is unlikely that they would be regarded as objective if they oversee their own authorisations.

Types of Surveillance

- 2.1 Surveillance can be overt or covert. Overt surveillance does not require authorisation under RIPA and covers all situations where surveillance is not covert. The use of such surveillance is to be commended where the required result can be achieved by this means.
- 2.2 Covert surveillance is carried out in a manner calculated to ensure that the person subject to the surveillance is unaware that it is or may be taking place.
- 2.3 There are three types of covert surveillance:

'Intrusive Surveillance' - the Council has no statutory power to grant authorisations for intrusive surveillance but it is included here to alert officers to be aware of inadvertently breaching this rule.

Intrusive surveillance is covert and carried out in relation to anything taking place on any residential premises or any private vehicle. Anything that occurs on residential premises or any private vehicle and involves the presence of someone on the

premises or in the vehicle or is carried out by means of a surveillance device will be intrusive. If the device is not on the premises or in the vehicle, it is only intrusive if it consistently produces information of the same quality as if it were.

Residential Premises includes any premises as is for the time being occupied or used by any person, however, temporary, for residential purposes or otherwise as living accommodation. It will not include communal areas, front gardens or driveways visible to the public.

Private vehicles will be those used primarily for the private purpose of the person who owns it or a person otherwise having the right to use it.

‘Directed Surveillance’ – this is covert surveillance that is not intrusive and is undertaken for the purposes of a specific investigation in a way that is likely to produce private information about a person. It must be necessary and proportionate to what it seeks to achieve.

‘Covert Human Intelligence Source’ (CHIS) – this is the use or conduct of someone who establishes or maintains a personal or other relationship with a person for the covert purpose of obtaining information. It must be necessary and proportionate to what it seeks to achieve.

Authorisation for Surveillance

- 3.1 As soon as a plan of action is decided upon which involves covert surveillance or the use of CHIS appropriate authorisation should be sought in advance.
- 3.2 All RIPA authorisations will require Magistrates Court approval in the form of an Order to take effect. The Home Office guidance on the judicial approval process for RIPA is available on the Home Office website.
- 3.3 The procedure outlined in the flowchart at **Appendix 2** should be followed by Officers to ensure formal quality assurance.
- 3.4 All applications for authorisation of directed surveillance must be in writing and stipulate:
 - how the surveillance will be conducted;
 - the grounds on which authorisation is sought. Authorisations cannot be granted unless specific criteria are satisfied. **For the Council, the only ground for authorisation is for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime which -**
 - (a) constitutes one or more criminal offences, or
 - (b) is, or corresponds to, any conduct which, if it all took place in England and Wales, would constitute one or more criminal offences.

And the criminal offence or one of the criminal offences is or would be-

- (a) an offence which is punishable, whether on summary conviction or on indictment, by a maximum term of at least 6 months of imprisonment, or
- (b) an offence under:
 - section 146 of the Licensing Act 2003 (sale of alcohol to children);
 - section 147 of the Licensing Act 2003 (allowing the sale of alcohol to children);

- section 147A of the Licensing Act 2003 (persistently selling alcohol to children);
- section 7 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (sale of tobacco, etc, to persons under eighteen)
- a full account of the investigation or operation (including full details of where the surveillance is to take place);
- likelihood of acquiring any confidential material as a consequence of the surveillance;
- the details of any potential collateral intrusion and an assessment of the risk of such intrusion or interference. There is an obligation on officers to ensure that collateral intrusion is minimised and is not excessive in the circumstances
- the reasons why the directed surveillance is considered to be proportionate to what it seeks to achieve (including the relevant circumstances);
- the identities, where known, of those to be the subject of directed surveillance;
- an explanation of the information which it is desired to obtain as a result of the authorisation;
- where the authorisation is sought urgently, reasons why the case is considered to be urgent;
- a subsequent record of whether authority was granted or refused, by whom and the time and date.

3.5 Applications to the Court for an approval of an authorisation must be made in accordance with the requirements of the Court. Legal Services must be consulted on the application form to the Magistrates Court.

The applicant must:

- apply in writing and serve the application on the court officer;
- attach the authorisation or notice which the applicant wants the court to approve;
- attach such other material (if any) on which the applicant relies to satisfy the court of the statutory requirements;
- attach the proposed terms of the Order (Annex B court document);
- the forms and supporting documentation **MUST** make the case it is not enough for an officer to provide oral evidence not supported by the contents of the paper;
- provide the court (on request) with a signed Delegated Power authorising the appearance of the local authority in legal proceedings.

3.6 **Appendix 3** outlines the local authority procedure for seeking an order from the Magistrates Court.

3.7 The Officers within the Council entitled to grant authorisations are specified in legislation and are those whose posts appear in **Appendix 1**, however it is important that all those involved in undertaking surveillance are fully aware of the extent and limits of the authorisation in question.

3.8 Wherever knowledge of confidential information is likely to be acquired, a higher level of authorisation is needed. Confidential information consists of communications subject to legal privilege, communications between a Member of

Parliament and another person on constituency matters, confidential personal information, or confidential journalistic material. So, for example, extra care should be taken where, through the use of surveillance, if it is likely that knowledge will be acquired of communications between a minister of religion and an individual relating to the latter's spiritual welfare, or between a Member of Parliament and a constituent relating to constituency matters, or wherever matters of medical or journalistic confidentiality or legal privilege may be involved. Authorisation can only be provided by the Chief Executive or in his/her absence the Monitoring Officer.

- 3.9 Authorising Officers should not be responsible for authorising their own activities. Because of the number of officers designated as Authorising Officers within the Council, this situation should be avoidable.

Necessity and Proportionality

- 3.10 In signing the application an Authorising Officer must give personal consideration to the necessity and proportionality of the proposed surveillance prior to applying to the Magistrates for approval and must personally ensure that the surveillance is reviewed and cancelled.

- 3.11 Proportionality will involve balancing the seriousness of intrusion into the privacy of the subject of the operation (or any other person who may be affected) against the need for the activity in investigative and operational terms. The authorisation will not be proportionate if it is excessive in the overall circumstances of the case. Each action authorised should bring an expected benefit to the investigation or operation and should not be disproportionate or arbitrary. The fact that a suspected offence may be serious will not alone render intrusive actions proportionate. Similarly, an offence may be so minor that any deployment of covert techniques would be disproportionate.

- 3.12 No activity should be considered proportionate if the information which is sought could reasonably be obtained by other less intrusive means. The following elements of proportionality should be considered:

- balancing the size and scope of the proposed activity against the gravity and extent of the perceived crime or offence;
- explaining how and why the methods to be adopted will cause the least possible intrusion on the subjects and others;
- considering whether the activity is an appropriate use of the legislation and a reasonable way, having considered all reasonable alternatives, of obtaining the necessary result;
- evidencing, as far as practicable, what other methods had been considered and why they were not implemented.

- 3.13 If the Authorising Officer is unsure on any matter they should seek advice from the SRO.

- 3.14 Urgent authorisations should not be necessary. An authorisation is not to be regarded as urgent where the need for an authorisation has been neglected or the urgency is of the Authorising Officer's or Applicant's own making. The Magistrates Court may consider an authorisation out of hours in **exceptional** circumstances. Please refer to **Appendix 3** for the procedure to be followed when an authorisation is urgent and cannot be handled the next working day.

- 3.15 Officers conducting covert surveillance will have a full briefing and be required to read the authorisation granted to ensure that their activity is based on what has been specifically authorised and not merely what has been requested.

Duration

- 3.16 An authorisation granted by an Authorising Officer will cease to have effect (unless renewed) at the end of a period of three months beginning with the day on which it took effect.
- 3.17 As soon as the decision is taken that directed surveillance should be discontinued, the instruction must be given to those involved to stop all surveillance. The date and time when such an instruction was given should be recorded.

Renewals

- 3.18 If at any time before an authorisation would cease to have effect, the Authorising Officer considers it necessary for the authorisation to continue for the purpose for which it was given, he may renew it in writing for a further period of three months. Applications for renewal should only be made shortly before the authorisation is due to expire and must be submitted to the Magistrates Court for approval before they can be effective.
- 3.19 Authorisations may be renewed more than once if necessary, provided they continue to meet the criteria for authorisation and are approved by the Magistrates Court.
- 3.20 All applications for the renewal of an authorisation should record:
- whether this is the first renewal or every occasion on which the authorisation has been renewed previously;
 - any significant changes to the information as outlined in the original application;
 - the reasons why it is necessary to continue with the surveillance;
 - the content and value to the investigation or operation of the information so far obtained by the surveillance;
 - the results of regular reviews of the investigation or operation.
- 3.21 In rare circumstances renewals may be granted orally in urgent cases but will still require the approval of the Magistrates Court.

Cancellations

- 3.22 The Authorising Officer who granted or last renewed the authorisation must cancel it if s/he is satisfied that the directed surveillance no longer meets the criteria upon which it was authorised. The cancellation should include how the surveillance assisted the investigation. When cancelling an authorisation, an Authorising Officer must ensure that proper arrangements have been made for the activity's discontinuance, including the removal of any technical equipment. Where the Authorising Officer is no longer available, this duty will fall on any one of the other Authorising Officers listed at **Appendix 1**.

Reviews

- 3.23 Reviews of authorisations should be undertaken on a monthly basis to assess the need for the surveillance to continue. The results of a review should be recorded.

Where the surveillance provides access to confidential information or involves collateral intrusion authorisations for such surveillance should be reviewed frequently.

- 3.24 If the Authorising Officer is in any doubt they should ask the SRO before any directed surveillance is authorised, renewed, cancelled or rejected.

Drive-bys

- 4.1 'Drive-by' surveillance may or may not need a RIPA authorisation and it is not acceptable to prescribe a minimum number of passes before an authorisation is required. Where an officer as part of an investigation, intends to drive by a property to establish the location of a property then an authorisation is unlikely to be required. However, if the drive-by is to assess for signs of occupation and a record is to be made or the drive-bys are repeated and/or systematic, then an authorisation may be required. Consideration should also be given to the likelihood of collateral intrusion.

CCTV

- 5.1 The use of overt CCTV cameras does not normally require an authorisation as members of the public will be aware that such systems are in use (e.g. visible signage). However, where overt CCTV cameras are used in a covert and pre-planned manner as part of a specific investigation or operation, an authorisation should be considered.
- 5.2 If a law enforcement agency (eg Police) wishes to use the Council's CCTV system for directed surveillance, a copy of the authorisation will be required (redacted if necessary to prevent the disclosure of sensitive information) and the equipment will only be used in accordance with the authorisation.

Internet and Social Networking Sites

- 6.1 Although social networking and internet sites are easily accessible, consideration must still be given about whether a RIPA authorisation should be obtained if they are going to be used during the course of an investigation. If the study of an individual's online presence becomes persistent, or where material obtained from any check is to be extracted and recorded and may engage privacy considerations, RIPA authorisations may need to be considered.
- 6.2 Care must be taken to understand how the social media site being used works. Officers must not be tempted to assume that one service provider is the same as another or that the services provided by a single provider are the same.
- 6.3 Depending on the nature of the online platform, there may be a reduced expectation of privacy where information relating to a person or group of people is made openly available within the public domain, however in some circumstances privacy implications still apply. This is because the intention when making such information available was not for it to be used for a covert purpose such as investigative activity. This is regardless of whether a user of a website or social media platform has sought to protect such information by restricting its access by activating privacy settings.
- 6.4 In order to determine whether a directed surveillance authorisation should be sought for accessing information on a website as part of a covert investigation or

operation, it is necessary to look at the intended purpose and scope of the online activity it is proposed to undertake. Factors that should be considered in establishing whether a directed surveillance authorisation is required include:

- Whether the investigation or research is directed towards an individual;
- Whether it is likely to result in obtaining private information about a person or group of people;
- Whether it is likely to involve visiting internet sites to build up a picture or profile;
- Whether the information obtained will be recorded and retained;
- Whether the information is likely to provide an observer with a pattern of lifestyle;
- Whether the information is being combined with other sources of information, which amounts to information relating to a person's private life;
- Whether the investigation or research is part of an ongoing piece of work involving repeated viewing of the subject(s);
- Whether it is likely to involve identifying and recording information about third parties, such as friends and family members of the subject of interest, or information posted by third parties, that may include private information and therefore constitute collateral intrusion into the privacy of these third parties.
- Conversely, where the Council has taken reasonable steps to inform the public or particular individuals that the surveillance is or may be taking place, the activity may be regarded as overt and a directed surveillance authorisation will not normally be available.

Example 1: *An officer undertakes a simple internet search on a name, address or telephone number to find out whether a subject of interest has an online presence. This is unlikely to need an authorisation. However, if having found an individual's social media profile or identity, it is decided to monitor it or extract information from it for retention in a record because it is relevant to an investigation or operation, authorisation should then be considered.*

Example 2: *The Council undertakes general monitoring of the internet in circumstances where it is not part of a specific, ongoing investigation or operation to identify themes, trends, possible indicators of criminality or other factors that may influence operational strategies or deployments. This activity does not require RIPA authorisation. However, when this activity leads to the discovery of previously unknown subjects of interest, once it is decided to monitor those individuals as part of an ongoing operation or investigation, authorisation should be considered.*

6.5 An authorisation for the use and conduct of a CHIS (see paragraph 7) may be needed if a relationship is established or maintained by the officer on behalf of the Council without disclosing his or her identity (i.e the activity will be more than mere reading of the site's content). This could occur if an officer covertly asks to become a 'friend' of someone on a social networking site.

- 6.6 It is not unlawful for an officer to set up a false identity but it is inadvisable to do so for a covert purpose without authorisation.
- 6.7 An officer should not adopt the identity of a person known, or likely to be known, to the subject of interests or users of the site without authorisation, and without the explicit consent of the person whose identity is used, and without considering the protection of that person.

Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS)

- 7.1 Under the 2000 Act, a person is a CHIS if:
- they establish or maintain a personal or other relationship with a person for the covert purpose of facilitating the doing of anything falling within paragraph 26(8)(b) or (c) of the Act;
 - they covertly use such a relationship to obtain information or to provide access to any information to another person; or
 - they covertly disclose information obtained by the use of such a relationship or as a consequence of the existence of such a relationship.
- 7.2 **Urgent advice from Legal should be sought should the use and conduct of a CHIS be considered. The Council is not required to seek or obtain an authorisation just because one is available. The use or conduct of a CHIS can be a particularly intrusive and high risk covert technique, requiring dedicated and sufficient resources, oversight and management.**
- 7.3 There is a separate Code of Practice for CHIS issued by the Home Office which officers should carefully study if a CHIS authorisation is sought. The same principles outlined above for directed surveillance apply to CHIS and should be followed including necessity and proportionality.
- 7.4 Officers should consider the security and welfare of the source and the foreseeable consequences to others in relation to what they are being asked to do. A risk assessment must be carried out before any authorisation is granted, at any renewal, review and cancellation.
- 7.5 Following authorisation and approval from the Magistrates Court, one officer is to be tasked with the day to day running of the CHIS, contact with them, giving them their tasks and keeping confidential records about what they achieve. A separate officer is to be appointed to oversee the use made of the CHIS.
- 7.6 An authorisation should not be granted for the use or conduct of a source unless believed that there are arrangements in place for ensuring there is at all times a person with the responsibility for maintaining a record of the authorisation and use made of source.
- 7.7 In deciding whether authorisation is required for a test purchase operation (for example in relation to sales of age restricted products), consideration should be given to:
- whether the activity is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about any person, and

- whether the test purchaser establishes or maintains a personal or other relationship with the seller.

In circumstances where the exercise is considered to fall outside the scope of RIPA, the reasons for this decision should be recorded.

- 7.8 An authorisation granted in writing by an Authorising Officer and approved by a Magistrates Court for the conduct or use of a CHIS will cease to have effect (unless renewed) at the end of a period of 12 months beginning with day on which it took effect.
- 7.9 Subject to legal privileged information, material obtained from a CHIS may be used as evidence in criminal proceedings whether these proceedings are brought by the Council or by another public authority.
- 7.10 Where the product of the use or conduct of a CHIS could be relevant to pending or future criminal or civil proceedings, it should be retained in accordance with applicable disclosure requirements.
- 7.11 Subject to legal privileged information, there is nothing under the Act which prevents material obtained from authorisations for the use or conduct of a CHIS for a particular purpose from being used to further other purposes.
- 7.12 When cancelling an authorisation, an Authorising Officer must ensure that proper arrangements have been made for the activity's discontinuance including directions for the management of the product.
- 7.13 An officer who conducts activity on the internet in such a way that they may interact with others, whether by publicly open websites or more private exchanges, in circumstances where the other parties could not reasonably be expected to know their true identity, should consider whether the activity requires a CHIS authorisation. A directed surveillance authorisation should also be considered, unless the acquisition of that information is or will be covered by the terms of an applicable CHIS authorisation.

Collaborative Working

- 8.1 When granting or applying for an authorisation, the officer will need to be aware of particular sensitivities in the local community where the surveillance or property interference is taking place, and of any similar activities being undertaken by other public authorities which could impact on the deployment of surveillance. It is therefore recommended that where an Authorising Officer considers that conflicts might arise, they should consult a senior officer within the police force area in which the investigation or operation is to take place.
- 8.2 Where possible, the Council should seek to avoid duplication of authorisations as part of a single investigation or operation. The Council may therefore work in conjunction with other agencies to carry out surveillance. It will not be necessary for each party to complete its own form of authorisation and the Council can rely upon a duly authorised form completed by another agency providing that the Authorising Officer and Legal Services are made aware and it has been approved by the Magistrates Court if required. Duplication of authorisations does not affect

the lawfulness of the activities to be conducted, but may create an unnecessary administrative burden on the Council.

- 8.3 A copy of the relevant forms and Magistrates Court approval should be obtained and copies kept in the same manner as an authorisation granted by the Council.
- 8.4 If an officer has any concerns regarding an authorisation, review or renewal completed by another agency they should refer the matter to Legal Services at the earliest opportunity.

Record Management

- 9.1 Authorising Officers must send the original of any authorisation, any cancellation, renewal or review to the SRO within 2 working days of the issue.
- 9.2 The Council must keep records relating to all authorisations, Magistrates Court approvals, reviews, renewals, cancellations and refusals in accordance with the Home Office Code of Practice. A Central Register of all authorisations, Magistrates approvals, reviews, renewals, cancellations, refusals and records of oral authorisations will be monitored and maintained by the SRO with each Department keeping their own file of copies of their authorisations.
- 9.3 Records must be available for inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner and retained to allow the Investigatory Powers Tribunal to undertake its functions. Although records are only required to be retained for at least three years, it is therefore desirable, if possible, to retain records for up to five years. Such information will be reviewed at appropriate intervals to confirm that the justification for its retention is still valid and will be securely destroyed as soon as it is no longer needed for authorisation purposes.
- 9.4 There are separate and specific record keeping requirements where use is made of CHIS. Records should be maintained in such a way as to preserve the confidentiality of the source and the information provided by that source. There should at all times be a designated person in the Council with responsibility for maintaining a record of the use made of the source.
- 9.5 Documents created under the RIPA procedure are highly confidential and shall be treated as such. Authorising Officers, through the Data Protection Officer must ensure compliance with the appropriate data protection requirements under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's internal arrangements relating to the handling and storage of material. The procedures and safeguards outlined in the Home Office Code of Practice will also be applied in relation to the handling of any material obtained through directed surveillance. Any breaches of data protection requirements should be reported immediately to the Data Protection Officer.
- 9.6 The SRO will ensure that robust and adequate arrangements are in place for the secure handling, storage and destruction of material obtained through the use of surveillance. The Council's internal safeguards will be kept under periodic review to ensure that they remain up to date and effective. Where the material could be relevant to pending or future criminal proceedings, it should be retained in accordance with established disclosure requirements for a suitable period and subject to review.

General Considerations

- 10.1 The SRO will ensure that guidance and training on RIPA is provided to staff requiring it. A record of those receiving training will be kept by the SRO.
- 10.2 Complaints may be dealt with by means of the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure and/or by virtue of a complaint to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT). The IPT has jurisdiction to investigate and determine complaints against the Council's use of investigatory powers, and is the only appropriate tribunal for human rights claims against the intelligence services. Following receipt of a complaint or claim from a person, the IPT can undertake its own enquiries and investigations and can demand access to all information held by the Council necessary to establish the facts of a claim and to reach a determination.
- 10.3 The body responsible for the oversight of RIPA is the Investigatory Powers Commissioner (IPC). The IPC are authorised to carry out inspections of the Council to review intelligence gathering procedures and administration processes.
- 10.4 This Policy is a public document and is operational forthwith, replacing any previous policies and procedures. It will be reviewed from time to time by the SRO and the Council's Cabinet shall set this Policy annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
- 10.5 Further advice on good practice is contained within the Home Office Codes of Practice as outlined at paragraph 1.2.

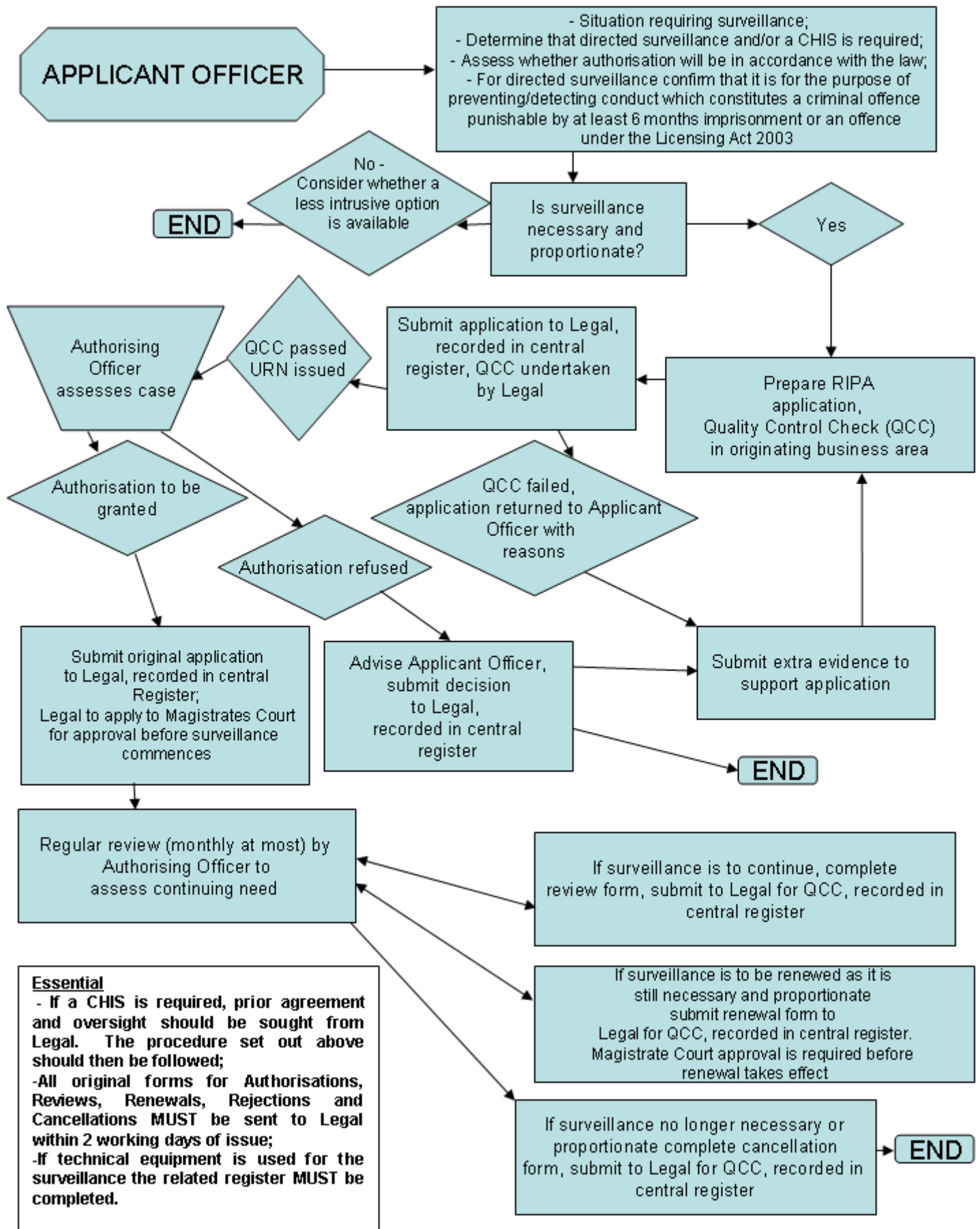
Senior Responsible Officer

The Monitoring Officer is authorised to act as the Senior Responsible Officer.

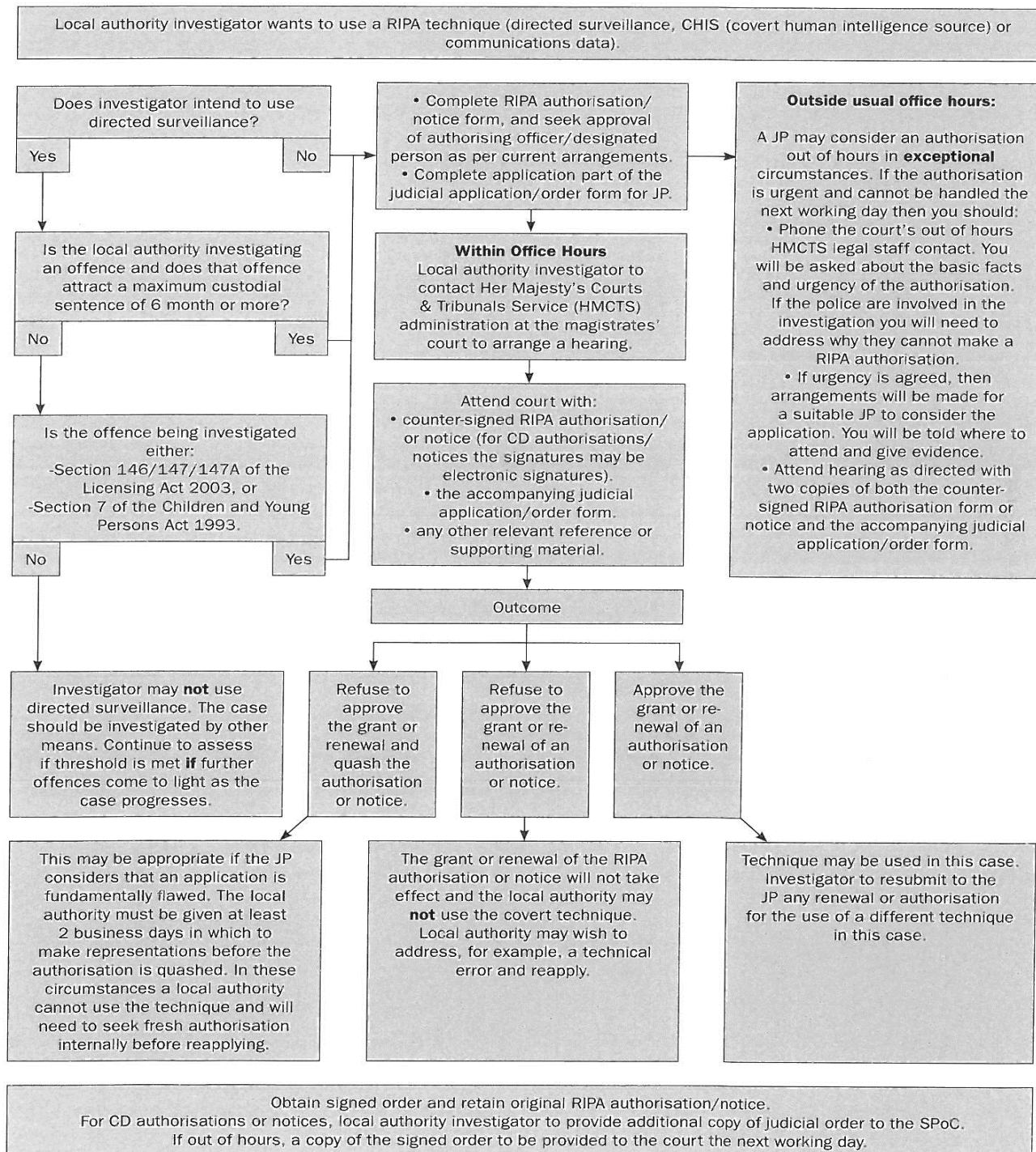
List of Designated Posts Nominated to Authorise Surveillance Activity in Bridgend County Borough Council under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

| <u>Post</u> | <u>Directorate/Department</u> |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Chief Executive | Chief Executive |
| Head of Partnership Services | Chief Executive |
| Head of Operations – Community Services | Communities |

RIPA AUTHORISATION FLOW CHART



LOCAL AUTHORITY PROCEDURE: APPLICATION TO A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE SEEKING AN ORDER TO APPROVE THE GRANT OF A RIPA AUTHORISATION OR NOTICE



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By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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