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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

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Ein cyf / Our ref:  
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**Dyddiad/Date:** Thursday, 4 September 2025

Dear Councillor,

**SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
(FORMERLY SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2)**

A meeting of the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Formerly Subject Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2) will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB / Remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 11 September 2025 at 10:00**.

**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 2014.

3 Approval of Minutes

To receive for approval the minutes of the 09/07/2025

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- 4 Draft Social Services Annual report 2024-25 11 – 88
- Invitees
- Councillor Jane Gebbie - Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
- Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
- Kelvin Barlow – Head of Adult Social Care  
Laura Kinsey - Head of Children and Family Services  
Sophie Moore - Group Manager - Prevention and Wellbeing  
Pete Tyson - Group Manager – Commissioning  
Debbie Morgan - Group Manager - Business Strategy, Performance & Improvement
- 5 Social Services Representations and Complaints Annual Report 2024-25 89 - 124
- Invitees
- Councillor Jane Gebbie - Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
- Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
- Kelvin Barlow – Head of Adult Social Care  
Laura Kinsey - Head of Children and Family Services  
Debbie Morgan - Group Manager - Business Strategy, Performance & Improvement
- 6 Conclusions and Recommendations
- 7 Forward Work Programme Update 125 - 140
- 8 Urgent Items
- To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

**Note: 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 would like to view this meeting live, please contact [cabinet\\_committee@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk) or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.**

Yours faithfully

**K Watson**

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

Councillors:

S Aspey

F D Bletsoe

S J Bletsoe

C Davies

S Easterbrook

P Ford

GC Haines

D M Hughes

RM James

P W Jenkins

W J Kendall

M Lewis

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

R Williams

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (FORMERLY SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2) HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 9 JULY 2025 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor F D Bletsoe – Chairperson

C Davies

GH Haines

D M Hughes

Present Virtually

S Aspey  
M Lewis

S J Bletsoe  
R Williams

S Easterbrook

P Ford

Apologies for Absence

RM James, P W Jenkins, W J Kendall and J Llewellyn-Hopkins

Invitees

Councillor Jane Gebbie

Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member Social Services, Health and Wellbeing

Claire Marchant  
Kelvin Barlow  
Michelle King  
Jason Howells

Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing  
Head of Adult Social Care  
Group Manager – Integrated Community Services – Community Resource Team  
Group Manager – Integrated Community Services – Community Networks

Matt Jenkins  
Julie Denley

Regional Integrated Services Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg  
Director, Primary Care, Community & Mental Health – Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Officers:

Meryl Lawrence  
Jessica McLellan

Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny  
Scrutiny Officer

Declarations of Interest

None.

**36. Approval of Minutes**

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u>  That the minutes of the meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 dated 1 May 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	9 July 2025

**37. Regional Partnership Agreement**

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u>  Following detailed consideration and discussions with a Cabinet Member, Officers and Invitees, the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information:  <b>Recommendations:</b>  1. The Committee reiterated their recommendation made on 1 May 2025, expressing concern at the number of acronyms being used within reports causing a barrier to full understanding of reports and terms included. and <b>recommended</b> that future reports contain a glossary of abbreviations to assist the Committee and the public. In addition, the Committee <b>recommended</b> that reports should
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	<p>be written in plain English avoiding unnecessarily complex language.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. The Committee expressed concern regarding the number of levels of governance set out in Figure 2 of the Agreement highlighting how it would involve multiple meetings of the same people and <b>recommended</b> that consideration be given to reducing the levels and, in particular, the removal of the Integrated Leadership Board.  However, given that the service user voice could be lost if the Integrated Leadership Board level of governance was removed, the Committee <b>recommended</b> that this be picked up in another level of governance.</li><li>3. The Committee expressed concern that despite reliance on other stakeholders, there appeared to be little reference to third sector and voluntary organisations in the Agreement and were advised of the possible challenges of obtaining funding without reference being made to them. The Committee therefore <b>recommended</b> that third sector and voluntary organisations be fully described in the Agreement.</li><li>4. The Committee expressed concern that 'Outcomes' had been replaced with 'Output' in the <i>Outcomes and Performance and Measurement Framework</i> (Appendix 1) and <b>recommended</b> that this be addressed to provide clearer understanding.</li><li>5. The Committee acknowledged the innovative and transformational work taking place in the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and that the Community Resource Team's delivery model was being replicated as best practice across the other local authorities within the region and <b>recommended</b> that correspondence be sent to the Corporate Director recognising the work and thanking her and her team.</li></ol> <p><b>Additional Information Requested:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. The Committee <b>requested</b> that information regarding the Members information day being arranged by the Regional Partnership highlighting the regional working arrangements be shared with Members once arranged.</li><li>7. Members <b>requested</b> that the PowerPoint slides and the video shared with the Committee during the meeting be shared with Members.</li></ol>
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	<p>8. The Committee <b>requested</b> the case studies demonstrating hospital avoidance in cases of complex needs and safeguarding concerns referred to by the Group Manager – Integrated Community Services – Community Networks.</p> <p>9. The Committee <b>requested</b> detail of the membership of the Integrated Leadership Board.</p>
Date Decision Made	9 July 2025

**38. Corporate Parenting Champion Nomination Report**

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>That Councillor Della Hughes be nominated to represent the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an Invitee to meetings of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.</p>
Date Decision Made	9 July 2025

**39. Forward Work Programme Update**

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>The Committee approved the draft Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A subject to the inclusion of the recommendations below, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B and noted that the FWP would be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.</p> <p>1. The Committee <b>requested</b> that the Regional Partnership Agreement be added to their FWP for review after 12 months.</p>
Date Decision Made	9 July 2025



**Urgent Items**

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	9 July 2025

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

The meeting closed at 12:40.

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# Agenda Item 4

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11 SEPTEMBER 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>DRAFT SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>DEBBIE MORGAN GROUP MANAGER, BUSINESS STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE &amp; IMPROVEMENT</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>The Social Services Annual Report 2024-25 is a statutory requirement providing the Council, the people of Bridgend County Borough, regulators and partners with an overview of the effectiveness of Social Services and Wellbeing in the county borough in the last year.</b></p> <p><b>The report reflects on 2024-25, highlighting achievements and challenges whilst outlining priorities for 2025-26. New report guidance has been introduced for the reporting year, with performance being assessed across the 4 areas of People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration and Well-being, with each area focusing on 2 quality standards.</b></p> <p><b>As well as the performance assessment section of the report, it also includes a Director’s summary, information on leadership, workforce, inspections and reviews and complaints and representations.</b></p> <p><b>The report highlights our key risks and financial resources noting the key challenges and pressures the Directorate and the Council face to deliver statutory services in fulfilling its statutory social services and wellbeing duties for the people of the county borough.</b></p>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the draft Social Services Annual Report 2024-25 (**Appendix 1**) to the Committee for scrutiny of its contents including analysis of performance, actions completed, impact made, areas for improvement and priorities for 2025-26. This is an opportunity for pre-scrutiny prior to approval by Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Following the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), Welsh Government developed a performance framework which aimed to ensure local authorities report on and performance evaluate against the well-being outcomes of the SSWBA. The Act seeks to do this by:

- transforming the way in which social services are delivered, primarily through promoting people's independence and giving them a strong voice and control,
- promoting partnership working; and
- enhancing the preventative role of social care and health, setting out overarching well-being duties to reduce or delay the need for care and support.

- 2.2 Initial guidance for the Social Services Annual Report was published in 2017, however, to reflect developments since 2017, including the new Performance Management Framework, as well as feedback from local authorities and stakeholders, in May 2024, Welsh Government and the Association of the Directors of Social Services Cymru issued the "Local Authority Social Services Annual Report (Director's Report) Guidance".

- 2.3 This new guidance comes into effect in 2025. This means reports reflecting the 2024-25 financial year will need to follow the new guidance. The new guidance clearly sets out what is to be included in the report and how Welsh Government will measure performance.

## **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 As outlined in the Annual Report Guidance, the SSWBA requires local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers to promote the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. It further adds that the Act seeks to ensure:

- People have control over what support they need, making decisions about their support as an equal partner.
- There is proportionate assessment that focuses on the individual.
- Carers have an equal right to an assessment for support to those they care for.
- Easy access to information and advice is available to all.
- Arrangements to safeguard people are stronger.
- A preventative approach to care and support needs.
- Local authorities and health boards work in partnership to drive integration, innovation and service change including new forms of provision.

3.2 Welsh Government has now made the Annual Report an integral part of the Performance Improvement Framework, which focuses on eight quality standards under the four key areas of people, prevention, partnership and integration and wellbeing as noted in **Table 1**. These areas are addressed in the performance assessment section of the report with previous guidance measuring performance under six quality standards.

**Table 1**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Standards</b>
<b>1. People</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them.</li> <li>2. Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Prevention</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved.</li> <li>4. Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Partnership and Integration</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Effective partnerships are in place to commission and fully deliver fully integrated, high quality sustainable outcomes for people.</li> <li>6. People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Well-being</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm.</li> <li>8. People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible.</li> </ol>

3.3 The Annual Report Guidance gives clear instruction on how to structure the report and highlights the key areas to focus on, which as well as the eight quality standards within section 3 of the report, also includes key information on leadership, the workforce, financial resources, inspections and reviews as well as complaints and representations.

3.4 The report must begin with a Director's summary focusing on the following areas:

- main achievements.
- key risks and challenges.
- priorities and overarching objectives for 2025-26.

3.5 Throughout the report there is evidence of key service developments made throughout the reporting year, the impact made and how we have engaged with the people that access our services. Examples of achievements included in the Director's summary note:

- a strengthened and stabilised workforce.
- further embedding of the "signs of safety" practice model in Children and Family Services and the "outcomes focused, strengths based" practice model in Adult Social Care.
- integration of the early help and edge of care services.
- the remodelling of care and support at home.
- the range of services provided by our prevention and wellbeing service to support people within a community setting.

3.6 The most significant risks the Directorate faces and how they will be mitigated are also included in the Director's summary. Examples include:

- the increasing complexity of need linked to an aging population.
- ensuring sufficient provision of care and support, including placement sufficiency for care experienced children.
- the impact of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill 2025 and the challenging timescales and financial implications of the removal of profit for children's social care.
- the replacement of the current social services digital case management system.
- increased pressures on our partners.

3.7 Whilst specific priorities are noted in the performance assessment section, under the four areas of people, prevention, partnerships and integration and well-being; the directorate's strategic priorities for 2025-26 are outlined in the Director's summary:

- Supporting workforce wellbeing, retention and recruitment to continue to achieve a highly motivated, well supported skilled workforce.
- Embedding our models of practice and using our quality assurance and learning and development programmes to address variation in quality.
- Enhancing our prevention, early intervention and edge of care services to support more people to live independently and well and for children to live safely with their own families.
- Embedding our operating models in adults, children and families and prevention and wellbeing which have early help and prevention at their core.
- Hearing and acting upon the voice of the people we work with and alongside.
- Addressing deficits in the sufficiency of services, particularly children's not for profit residential and fostering services and supported living, shared lives and extra care for adults.

- Understanding better current and future needs and projections for social services and wellbeing services, including the impact of new legislation and demographics, to align service and financial plans which mean we are as best placed as possible to achieve sustainable social services at a cost affordable to the Council.
- Investing in partnerships with other public services, the third sector and community groups to improve outcomes for individuals and families in the most effective and cost effective way.
- Implementing a new digital system which will modernise the way our workforce practice, whilst we support them to prepare for social care being at the fore of the Council's digital strategy.

3.8 It is important to note that all priorities are reflected in the Directorate's 2025-26 business plan and link to our 3-year strategic plans ("Think Family" in Children and Family Services" and "Building on Strengths, Improving Lives' in Adult Social Care).

3.9 In developing the Annual Report, engagement and consultation activity has taken place via a number of channels including People First Bridgend, the Bridgend Youth Forum, domiciliary care community meetings and the social services complaints and compliments process. It is important the voice of the people we work with is heard so that areas of good practice are shared and areas for improvement addressed.

3.10 Finally, it is important to note that the report acknowledges the support of the whole Council, our partners in South Wales Police, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) and other statutory partners, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg regional partnership, our cultural and leisure partners; Awen and Halo, and other third sector partners. It also pays tribute to the exceptional commitment to the most vulnerable people across the borough and the professionalism and commitment of the workforce across both statutory and preventative services.

3.11 As a part of this process, accessibility checks have been completed on the current draft design which have identified a few areas of the design that require amendments in preparation for publishing. This will be completed with the designer following leave. These will not affect the content of the report.

#### **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 implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the SSWBA, supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and

families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the well-being goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

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

- **Long Term:** Social Services is needs led and the 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, due to increased contacts, rising demographics and increasing complexity, the continued improvement and transformation of services remains a priority. The prevention section of the report demonstrates how we are thinking long term by supporting resilient communities. For example, our prevention and wellbeing service and their partners are ensuring people are connected to their communities and that carers have a range of support and services they can access to support them in their caring role.
- **Prevention:** The report highlights developments by the directorate in line with the SSWBA with the new guidance focussing on prevention as one of its 4 key areas for performance assessment. Key examples noted in report include the integration of early help and edge of care services in Children and Family Services providing timely support to prevent intervention by statutory services. In Adult Social Care the remodelling of the care and support at home service has enabled a more effective response to need to support people in maintaining their independence.
- **Integration:** The implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided with another area of the performance assessment section focusing on partnership and integration. Key examples included in the report note how the Integrated Cluster Network Teams in Adult Social care work jointly with CTMUHB to deliver and adapt services to people within the community. The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) co-locates adult and children safeguarding and partners from police, health, education and probation. The prevention and wellbeing service work with third sector partners HALO and AWEN to deliver cultural, leisure and wellbeing services across the borough
- **Collaboration:** The collaborative approaches noted in the report, are managed and monitored through various regional collaborative boards. These include the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTMSB). Working regionally enables the directorate to strategically plan and deliver local services by optimising available resources.
- **Involvement:** Our most important stakeholders are the people who use our services, and it is important their voice is heard and acted upon. One of the 4 key areas within the performance assessment section, focusses on people and ensuring they have a voice, choice and control over their lives and what is important to them. Within Children and Family Services we have implemented the “Most Significant Change” model to gather feedback from people and understand



the impact we are making. In Adult Social Care the “Better Together Bridgend” partnership brings together people with a learning disability to plan service improvements with the Council and providers to work together to plan and co-produce services.

## **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change or nature implications arising from this report.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 How we support and continue to improve and strengthen our safeguarding arrangements is a key theme throughout the annual report and remains a key priority.

7.2 Key safeguarding actions are noted within the “Well-being” section and include:

- the implementation of the “no wrong door” approach across Children and Family Services to target early intervention to prevent situations getting worse.
- and the introduction of several panels and groups to support our statutory safeguarding duties within Adult Social Care. These include the complex care panel, the self-neglect panel and the suicide and self-harm prevention group.

7.3 The directorate’s safeguarding priorities for 2025-26 include:

- the implementation of the Regional Exploitation Strategy.
- ensuring learning from Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews and other in-depth analysis is systematically embedded through learning, training and development.
- and monitoring the attendance and engagement at corporate safeguarding board meetings to ensure the Council is protecting children and vulnerable adults.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications from this report, the short, medium and long term sustainability of social services, well-being and prevention presents growing challenges on the Council to meet statutory responsibilities for the most vulnerable and deliver a balanced budget. Part 8 of the SSWBA requires the Head of Paid Service and the Corporate Director of Social Services to ensure Members have clear advice on the level of resources required for a local authority to effectively deliver its social services functions.

8.2 The report highlights the significant issues in respect of the directorate’s budget to meet the need for social care services in Bridgend. Whilst the budget outturn position for Adult and Children’s Social Care in 2024-25 was an overspend of £1.009 million against a net budget of £102.916 million, this was only possible due to a one-off funding grant and without this grant, the outturn would have increased the overspend to £2.986 million.

- 8.3 With over 10% of the Social Services and Wellbeing budget being dependent on specific grant funding, there is a significant financial risk to the Council should these grants be reduced or withdrawn.
- 8.4 The annual report also highlights key areas of financial pressure for the directorate including:
- Residential placements within Children and Family Services.
  - The impact of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill (2025) on not for-profit providers.
  - Pressures in adult social care within learning disabilities, mental health, physical disabilities and older people's services driven by increase in cost, volume of people supported and complexity of need.
- 8.5 In February 2025, Council approved £8.8 million in budget pressures for 2025-26 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2028-29 to support the directorate in addressing these ongoing pressures. The Social Services Improvement Board is overseeing actions to address the service and financial pressures.

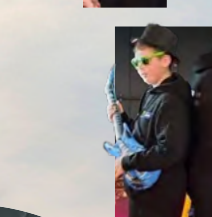
## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the content of the Director of Social Services draft Annual Report for 2024-5 and provides feedback to be considered in preparation for the report being presented to Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

### **Background documents**

None

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol



BRIDGEND COUNTY BROUGH COUNCIL  
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR

# Social Services

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024-25

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# 1 DIRECTORS SUMMARY

This is my fifth annual report as Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing in Bridgend. Preparing this report is one of the most important duties of a Director of Social Services. The annual report sets out the Council's effectiveness in delivering social services and wellbeing for our residents. It helps celebrate what is going well, acknowledge where we need to improve and set out priorities for the coming year.

This report is prepared as a statutory requirement under the Code of Practice issued under Part 8 of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014).

I must start by thanking our social services and wellbeing workforce - in the Council and commissioned services - who have gone above and beyond to make life better for our most vulnerable citizens. I am proud of how they have supported people with compassion, skill and professionalism. They focus on building relationships and taking time to listen and understand what matters to children, families, adults and carers. It is a privilege for us all to work with individuals and their families at some of the most challenging times of their lives.

We have a clear purpose for social services and wellbeing in Bridgend:

*“We exist to exercise our legal and moral duties to help those who need care and support in Bridgend to have the best possible life. We have clear strategic plans and priorities for children and families and adult social care and wellbeing in Bridgend.”*

The environment we are working in is challenging with a high and growing number of contacts with children and family services and adult social care. Our population is growing and ageing. Poverty, age, disability and illness, domestic abuse and use of substances have a major impact on individuals and communities. Children and young people face challenges unknown to previous generations including a growth in safeguarding related cybercrime.

Alongside changing needs, there is new progressive legislation to remove profit from children's social care in Wales. The financial position of local government remains challenging. The proportion of local authority budgets spent on social services across Wales has increased lessening the proportion available to invest in preventative and wellbeing services which reduce the need for long term care and support.

Despite the challenges, this report is optimistic. Successful workforce planning, succession planning, a focus on workforce wellbeing and learning and development means we have a well-supported, well-motivated workforce. We have reduced our reliance on agency workers which gives more continuity to the people we support. We have strong and effective models of practice and are reducing variability in standards. We have a range of services which are good quality and delivering positive outcomes and have plans to address gaps in services. We have effective early intervention and prevention and aim to support more people earlier and avoid people's needs escalating. We have robust and effective relationships with partners, which we will continue to nurture and invest time in. These relationships have been fundamental in our improvement journey over the last 3 years. They will be central to our continued transformation – as we aim to move our overall assessment of effectiveness from good to excellent.

# Children and Family Services

Our 3-year strategic plan for children and families 'Think Family' was published in September 2023, and focuses on:

- The voice of children and families
- Our workforce
- Our practice
- The impact of our services and interventions
- Our response to families with complex needs
- Our work with partners
- Our intelligence and information systems

In 2024-25 we have stabilised our workforce, embedded our signs of safety model of practice and integrated prevention and edge of care services. This has helped us have a positive impact for children and families in Bridgend.

We have made significant and sustained improvements in 2024-25. We have progressed at pace from a local authority where there our regulator, Care Inspectorate Wales, had 'serious concerns' in 2022. We developed a 'whole Council approach' to making the improvements needed, took bold action, based on a strong understanding of the local data, and analysis of evidence of what works. Our key improvement actions were:

- Developed a clear business case and strategic plan, supported by investment, to strengthen the children's workforce and early help services in September 2023, unanimously supported across the council.
- Strong and effective governance including a cross-party improvement board chaired by the Leader of Council.
- A focus on the workforce – both innovation

in securing a permanent workforce in the short term through international recruitment and sustainable investment in the 'grow our own' programme of internal succession planning and commitment and practice of compassionate leadership, workforce wellbeing and ongoing learning and development.

- A clear practice model accompanied by low social work caseloads which enable the workforce to build strong relationships with families, building on strengths, whilst acting swiftly to address danger.
- The integration of early help and edge of care services so children and families access the right support from the right person at the right time.
- Effective partnership working based on a clear purpose, appropriate professional challenge and strong mutual support.
- Strong data and intelligence, quality assurance and the support of an independent improvement partner.

An improvement check in June 2025 considered the effectiveness of children's services in Bridgend including progress against previous Care Inspectorate Wales recommendations and found:

*"BCBC leaders have consistently prioritised children's services, to support sustained and timely improvements. This has significantly strengthened the quality and delivery of social services functions. The local authority has moved from having a fragile workforce and critical deficits in capacity, to an overall position of stability. This is the most significant change made since 2022-23, which underpins the local authority's capacity to drive forward and sustain improvements. This positive improvement has been achieved through sustained focus on workforce wellbeing and practice quality."*

In terms of impact, we have reduced the number and proportion of children and young people who experience care and support and require safeguarding interventions in Bridgend. We have helped more families in Bridgend live well together and raise their children to be resilient and live the lives that they want to live as adults. We still need to do more to focus a greater proportion of our resources on cost-effective preventative support for families with complex needs rather than expensive substitute care experiences. We are working with our partners to make sure more families get the right help at the right time and reduce the number of times we have to intervene in a crisis

It is important to acknowledge the progress made and celebrate the workforce who have improved outcomes for children and families in Bridgend. It is also important to avoid complacency both about the areas where we still need to improve and, the oversight and scrutiny required to assure ourselves regarding the quality of practice. The focus in the next year includes areas identified by CIW as requiring further improvement, as well as areas we have identified ourselves.

#### We need to:

- Improve the sufficiency of foster carers and residential provision in Bridgend for our most vulnerable children. This includes opening 2 more residential homes for children.
- Continue to improve Bridgend's fostering service, improving how we recruit, support and retain foster carers, match children to the right foster family and improve access to learning and development for foster carers.
- Reduce the variation in our practice and consistently record our work to a high standard.
- Strengthen quality assurance and ensuring more children are actively involved in their own care plans and reviews.
- Address gaps in our preventative services, particularly to meet the needs of adolescents for whom there is a higher risk of entry into the care system.
- Continue to improve practice and outcomes in our care experienced children and our fostering team, as they benefit from more recent workforce stability and consistency of management and leadership.
- Work with partners to improve out of hours emergency duty arrangements, understanding of our practice model, the response to professional concerns, and safeguarding children from exploitation.

# Adult Social Care

Our 3-year strategic plan for adult social care 'Building on Strengths, Improving Lives' was published in November 2024 and focuses on:

- Operating Model
- Outcomes-Focused Strengths-Based Practice Model
- Transforming Services
- Learning Disabilities
- Community Mental Health
- Lifelong Conditions or Complex Care Needs
- Supporting Priorities including workforce, learning and development and ICT

**The strategic plan builds on our strengths – we have well established, highly performing, integrated teams with a range of health and social care professionals working closely together to meet the needs of 'Mrs Jones' in a way that is seamless for the individual and families.**

We work particularly effectively for individuals and families living with long term conditions and age-related frailty. Our focus is on maximising independence and reducing dependency. At the end of March 2025, Bridgend County Borough Council was supporting the second lowest rate of people in Wales in long term care home accommodation.

Overall, the quality of adult social care services in Bridgend are also of a high standard. In 2024-25 Care Inspectorate Wales undertook six regulatory inspections of Bridgend County Borough Council registered care homes and an inspection of the Council's care and support at home service. Overall the inspections demonstrated that staff are highly trained and person centred in their practice and individuals and families can have a

high degree of confidence in the quality of care provided.

There has been a focus in the last year on remodelling care and support at home. More people have retained or regained skills following a period of ill health and prior to receiving a long-term package of domiciliary care in their own home. The majority of people who receive reablement have a positive outcome and their need for long term care is reduced or mitigated entirely. Less people have been delayed in their pathway of care following a hospital admission.

Adult safeguarding is also an area of strength. We have strengthened practice and ensured people get the right response from the right person at the right time. The team has worked effectively with partners to oversee improvements in how people in the secure estate in Bridgend are safeguarded. This is a complex area of work and the leadership of the Council's team has been commended by partners. There has also been an innovative approach with partners to suicide and self-harm prevention. A consultation line has been introduced which ensures referrers



have timely access to information, advice and assistance and we have also improved the way we manage deprivation of liberty safeguards.

We know there are some areas of adult services where further improvements are needed. Our community learning disability team has experienced a number of workforce challenges and we have yet to fully embed a progression approach which builds on people's strengths to maximise their independence. Our short term social work services – our Early Intervention and Prevention Hub and Hospital Social Work Team have also experienced difficulties in always having sufficient capacity to meet the levels of need presenting to them. We are working through focussed improvements in these areas and implementing plans to strengthen the workforce and practice.

Our priorities for improvement in 2025-26 are:

- Ensure people are only admitted to hospital where this is medically necessary and

people move smoothly to their next care setting on discharge from hospital – working with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board.

- Continue to transform the way we support people with learning disabilities.
- Improve the arrangements for supporting young people and their families during the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- Ensure there is sufficient accommodation care and support services to meet the needs of all our population groups in a way that supports people to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. We will recommission care and support at home services, develop a business case with partners for additional extra care and supported living provision and expand shared lives provision.
- Improve the way that we understand the needs of, and support, informal carers.

## Early Help, Prevention and Wellbeing

**In 2024-25 we integrated early help and edge of care services into the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate.**

Demand and referrals for early help have been increasing significantly. We have strengthened the early help offer and improved outcomes for families. New front door arrangements have helped us with early identification of risk, allowing teams to intervene before needs escalate. Earlier identification has allowed teams to undertake preventative work rather than reacting to crises. there has been a 67% reduction in the number of families stepping up to statutory services, which highlights the effectiveness of this early and preventative work. Impact measures have shown

that 96% of families reported feeling more able to make positive lifestyle and behaviour changes, and 94% of families reported improved family resilience.

The prevention and well-being offer in Bridgend has continued to be sector leading in supporting the most vulnerable citizens of the county borough to be healthy, well and connected in 2024-25. We understand people are experts in their own lives and are committed to co-producing solutions with people and groups. There are some excellent examples such as the Bridgend Inclusive Network Group (BING) which deliver support and training and over time has become sustainable and our young carers ambassadors who support their

peers in our young carers network to access support and design wellbeing activities. There are examples of positive practice working with people of all ages in the county borough including:

- Local community connectors and community navigators who work with people across the county borough to support them to make meaningful connections and live well in their own communities, developing new community activities such as bushcraft where these don't currently exist. Community connectors support individuals who are at the edge of needing statutory services; community navigators work with a wider range of people.
- The carer's wellbeing service signposted 4650 carers to appropriate services in 2024-25.
- The young carers networks which are engaging over 146 young carers in 'we are valued' days and has supported over 549 through the young carers card.
- Our new youth hub which meets twice a week in Bridgend Resource Centre and provides social opportunities children and young adults with additional needs
- Accredited training and supporting for people with meaningful occupation in Awen's Wood-B and B-Leaf supported employment.
- Our healthy living partnership with Halo leisure trust which has received the highest level of industry accreditation and has supported autism friendly swimming and the Feel Good for Life programme for those living with dementia, people who are lonely and isolated and their carers.
- Our cultural trust partner Awen who provide a range of library, cultural and wellbeing services to support people to be well and connected to their community.
- Our active young people's programme which engages children of different ages in sports, games, arts and creative activities.
- Our Bevan exemplar super agers programme which keeps us fit, active and socially connected as we grow older.

## Workforce

**Our workforce has been part of significant change programmes, embracing our models of social work practice in social services and wellbeing.**

We have had a strategic workforce board for 3 years which has focused on retention and recruitment, workforce planning, learning and development, workforce wellbeing and culture. Our own staff survey evidenced this as did the Care Inspectorate Wales survey of the children's services workforce found 86% staff would recommend working for us in Bridgend

County Borough Council. We have achieved a significant reduction in agency social workers, reduced staff turnover, improved recruitment and have evidenced effective succession planning. We are not complacent – we understand that a proportion of our workforce are not yet very experienced and we are committed to supporting and nurturing them. Some very experienced colleagues and senior leaders are nearing retirement and any change at a leadership level needs to be carefully planned and managed to mitigate the risk that staff become unsettled. Our workforce continues to be our highest priority.

# Financial Performance, Risks and Issues

Social care costs are increasing due to new legal duties, a growing population, an ageing demographic and greater complexity of needs in younger adults and children and families and rising costs of providing care. The impact of covid lockdowns on the most vulnerable is still being fully understood.

The budget outturn position for Adult and Children's Social Care in 2024-25 was an overspend of £1.009 million against a net budget of £102.916 million. This means the directorate was within 0.98% of the budget set. But without one-off grant funding we would have overspent by £2.986 million. As so much of our budget ( over 10%) is made of specific grants, there is a high service and financial risk if these grants, which largely fund core services, were to be withdrawn or reduced.

Social care is the second largest area of Council spend after education. The social services and well-being budget represents 30.25% of the Council's overall net revenue budget at £115.909m. The Council budget for 2025-26 built in additional funding following detailed planning between finance and social services and wellbeing colleagues. This was to reflect the costs of the real living wage for care workers, the costs of care experienced children and services for older adults, learning disabilities and mental health.

Over 75% of care is provided by providers who the Council has entered into commissioning arrangements with. Legally, local authorities are required to understand the cost of care and reflect this in its commissioning arrangements. The impact of the real living wage, employer's national insurance increases and other inflationary factors are resulting in the cost of care increasing.

The Council also has a statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient provision of care and support to meet the needs of the population – areas such as fostering and residential care for care experienced children and specialist residential care for adults where there is insufficient capacity experience significant cost pressures. 'Top-up' fees are increasingly charged by adult residential and nursing home providers in addition to the standard fee paid by the local authority or families. These have risen and cause stress on family and local authority budgets. The Council has developed commissioning strategies which it is implementing to mitigate these risks including developing more in-house children's homes, a strong focus on retention and recruitment of foster carers and plans to develop more extra care and supported living provision for adults. It should be noted that there is significant pressure on capital as well as revenue budgets and the social services directorate is very largely dependent on regional capital grants to progress our capital priorities.

The Code of Practice for Part 8 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act requires that *'as a member of the corporate management team, a director of social services may be required to consider overall resource implications, including budgetary issues. The head of paid service and the director of social services have a responsibility to ensure councillors have clear advice on the level of resources required for a local authority to effectively deliver its social services functions'*. In light of robust analysis and professional advice, the Council has supported pressures in Social Services as far as it has been able to in recent budgets, including an investment of £2 million in the Children's workforce in 2024-25 and £8.8 million in 2025-26 budget including £3.25

million investment in care experienced children and over £2 million to reflect the impact of the increases in the real living wage for care workers.

There are significant ongoing financial pressures for Council to be aware of in future medium term financial strategies:

- The impact of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill (2025) which will remove profit from children's social care by 2030. We know the transitional and ongoing costs will significantly exceed the grant funding we have been given. This is evident in the Welsh Government's Regulatory Impact Assessment. To mitigate this, we will continue to safely reduce the overall numbers of care experienced children and develop more in-house provision which achieves better outcomes and is more cost effective.
- The impact of demographics on need for social care –we will continue to mitigate needs for care and support through targeted prevention and reablement services but not all needs for care and support can be prevented. We need to continue our transformation programme in Bridgend. At a national policy level, a sustainable funding solution for funding social services is required, which does not place overall local authority budgets at risk and result in reducing other services which are in themselves essential in preventing the need for care and support.

There are a number of other risks and issues being managed and mitigated in social services and wellbeing which are reflected in corporate and directorate risk registers. The most significant are:

## Children's Placement Sufficiency

The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act (2025) received royal assent on 24 March 2025. The focus of the legislation is removing profit from children's social care in Wales which has created some additional instability in the children's social care market during the transition period, with a number of residential providers electing to withdraw whilst others have not yet disclosed their longer-term intentions.

There are insufficient foster care families in Foster-Wales Bridgend and an ageing foster carer population. The number of new foster carers we are recruiting are less than those leaving the service. There are at any time a small number of children living in residential care who could be supported in foster care. In 2024-25, there were also a small number of children at any one time living in settings which are "operating without registration". This is a significant risk as the safeguards of a registered

provision are not in place. The financial implications of high-cost placements, registered and operating without registration, is very high.

To manage this risk there is a renewed focus on our strategy to safely reduce the numbers of care experienced children. We are expanding our edge of care services which keep children safely living with their family. A detailed placement commissioning strategy has been developed which sets out the services that need to be developed to manage the transition to a not for profit children's social care system over the next 5 years. A fostering remodelling project is enhancing the offer and support to Bridgend foster carers. The Council is developing further in-house provision for care experienced children. The short term 'eliminating profit' grant funding to support the impact of the new legislation is supporting the transition but this is currently due to end in March 2028 which may create a revenue gap. Further service and financial modelling is being undertaken.

## Levels of Contact into Social Care Services

The number of referrals to children and family services has continued to increase. South Wales Police are the highest referrer. Further work will be undertaken with key partners.

The need for adult services also continues to grow as the population is increasing, and ageing. A new Early Intervention and Prevention Hub has been implemented from February 2025 which is channelling assessments through a new adult services front door, focusing on signposting and

advice with less ongoing care and support plans. The level of contacts to this service has also increased and we need to ensure that service capacity always meets the level of demand.

There have been significant increases in levels of care and costs of care for people with learning disabilities in recent years. There have been pressures in the social work teams due to court of protection safeguarding work and agency workforce has increased. A transformation programme and outcome surgeries have been established to improve practice and commissioning.

## Digital System Replacement

The Council is facing a number of challenges and risks in relation to a new system for its current safeguarding and case management IT System.

A new system has been procured but there is a significant amount of work to be undertaken to move from the current WCCIS system to the new Mosaic system. This is an area of significant concern which will be closely monitored corporately through our corporate risk register throughout 2025-26.

## Pressures on Partner agencies

Service and financial pressures are impacting all parts of public services and many organisations are making big changes to focus on their core business.

There is a risk this means a greater expectation on Council services and gaps in the support available to people from other agencies. We need to work through changes with partners to ensure people continue to access the support they need, whilst being clear what the local authority's responsibilities

are and the expectations on other partners to fulfil their responsibilities. This works best where there are integrated service arrangements such as the MASH and integrated adult community teams.

# Priorities for 2025-26

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Supporting workforce wellbeing, retention and recruitment to continue to achieve a highly motivated, well supported skilled workforce.

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Embedding our models of practice and using our quality assurance and learning and development programmes to address variation in quality.

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Enhancing our prevention, early intervention and edge of care services to support more people to live independently and well and for children to live safely with their own families.

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Embedding our operating models in adults, children and families and prevention and wellbeing which have early help and prevention at their core.

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Hearing and acting upon the voice of the people we work with and alongside.

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Addressing deficits in the sufficiency of services, particularly children's not for profit residential and fostering services and supported living, shared lives and extra care for adults.

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Understanding better current and future needs and projections for social services and wellbeing services, including the impact of new legislation and demographics, to align service and financial plans which mean we are as best placed as possible to achieve sustainable social services at a cost affordable to the Council.

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Investing in partnerships with other public services, the third sector and community groups to improve outcomes for individuals and families in the most effective and cost effective way.

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Implementing a new digital system which will modernise the way our workforce practice, whilst we support them to prepare for social care being at the fore of the Council's digital strategy.

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# Looking to the Future – Sustainably Improving at a Time of Challenge for Public Services

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a review of the last year, the progress we have made, the risks and issues we face and the areas where we will continue to improve.

Despite challenging levels of demand our performance is good and compares well with other local authorities in Wales. Our workforce is stable, well-motivated and committed to the Council. We have a strong and highly motivated management and leadership team. We work well with partner agencies. Our reviews show improvements in the quality of our practice – and this is reflected in the inspections undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales.

But there will always be areas which require improvement and we have focussed activity to deliver this. The risks set out in this report are considerable. The change of digital system in the next year presents a particularly significant risk. Our frontline workforce, managers and leaders all depend on an effective system to undertake their work and keep people safe. The financial risks to the Council remain challenging. We need to continue with a whole Bridgend community approach - one Council and partners - to work together to safeguard and improve outcomes for the most vulnerable.

My final word is one of sincere thanks, to all Councillors, my colleagues across the Council and in partner agencies. Your support has been unwavering and fundamental in achieving a well-functioning and, for the most part, highly performing social services and wellbeing service for the people of Bridgend. The progress set out within this report could not have been achieved without your leadership, challenge and commitment.

Diolch o galon,

*Claire Marchant*

Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing

JULY 2025

# 2

## CONTEXT

# What do we do?

The **Social Services and Wellbeing** directorate is made up of statutory services - Adult Social Care, Children and Family Services, Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting. We also lead the Prevention and Wellbeing service which includes the healthy living partnership with **Halo Leisure** and the cultural partnership with **Awen Cultural Trust**.

We work with other parts of the Council, partners, and the people of Bridgend, to promote wellbeing, connection and to safeguard and protect people with care and support needs.

## Our services

We provide a range of services, including:

### ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Early Intervention & Prevention  
 Assessment and Care Planning  
 Safeguarding (Adult Protection)  
 Mental Health services  
 Substance Misuse  
 Residential & Nursing Care  
 Extra Care  
 Supported Living  
 Domiciliary Care (Home care)  
 Reablement & Residential Reablement  
 Shared Lives  
 Equipment, Adaptations & Telecare  
 Respite Care  
 Direct Payments  
 Day Care  
 Advocacy

### PREVENTION AND WELLBEING

Early Intervention & Prevention  
 Active 4 Life  
 Community Engagement  
 Aging Well  
 Carer / Young Carer Support  
 BAVO Partnership
 

- Building Community Resilience

 Awen Partnership
 

- Libraries
- Theatres / Cultural Hubs
- Work Based Initiatives

 Halo Healthy Living Partnership
 

- Life Centres
- GP Referral Scheme
- Falls Prevention
- Health and Wellbeing Membership
- Free Swim Initiative

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Early Intervention & Prevention  
 Assessment and Care Planning  
 Safeguarding (Child Protection)  
 Foster Care  
 Residential Care  
 Care Leavers  
 Direct Payments  
 Respite Care  
 Advocacy



# Who do we support?

We work with the most vulnerable children and adults, their families and carers, to enable them to live safely and well. This is often in challenging circumstances resulting from age, disability, poverty, or risk of neglect and abuse.

This year, (as at 31st March) we were providing services to **1011 children and young people**; and **1977 adults**.

The tables below shows the number of people receiving managed care and support (excluding those going through the assessment process, who are not yet in receipt of a care plan).

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE SUPPORTED\*

Care and Support	<b>608</b>
Child Protection	<b>75</b>
Care Experienced Children	<b>333</b>

\* These figures include 242 children with a disability and 126 care leavers. A child or young person can be in more than one category.

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE SUPPORTED\*\*

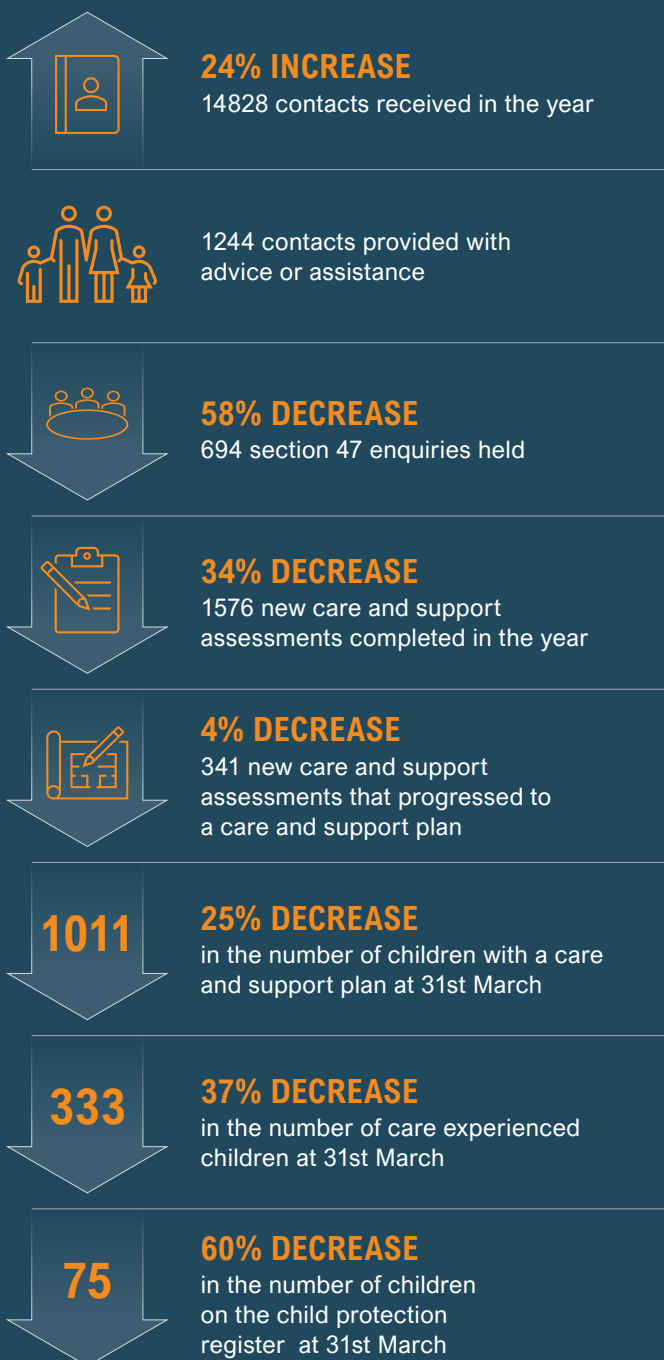
Adult Social Work Teams	<b>1388</b>
Learning Disability	<b>347</b>
Mental Health	<b>159</b>
Early Intervention and Prevention Hub	<b>72</b>
Secure Estates	<b>11</b>

\*\*The Adult Social Work and Early Intervention and Prevention Teams support adults aged 18+ including older adults, those with cognitive impairment, a physical disability and / or sensory loss or impairment.

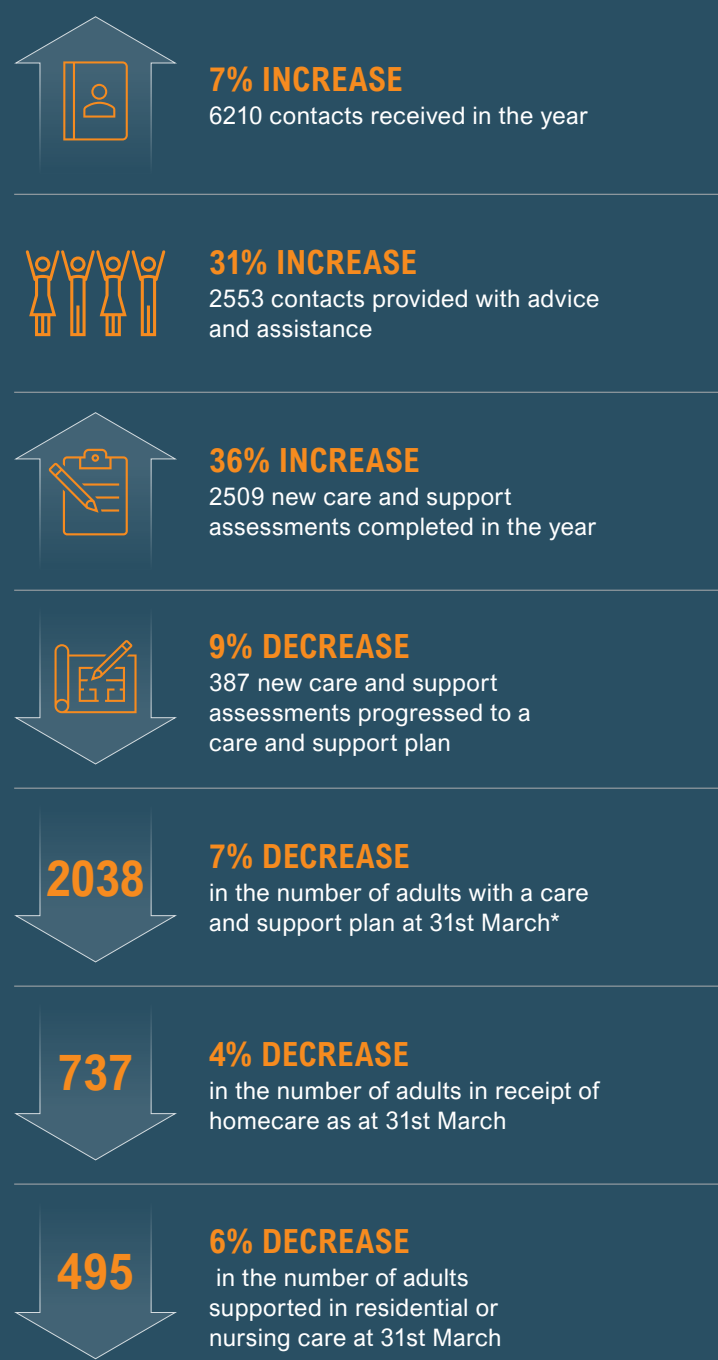
We also work with many more children and families and adults and carers preventatively.

# 2024-25: The year in summary

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES



## ADULT SOCIAL CARE



\* This figure includes 61 adults known to the Child Disability & Transition Team as they are aged 18+ years. (Please note these should also be included in the 1011 children with a care and support plan.)

# Leadership

**‘Delivering Together Our Corporate Plan 2023-28’** sets out the council’s priorities and how we will work with local people and partners to provide services over the next five years.

The plan was produced using feedback from staff, residents of all ages and backgrounds, users and providers of council services, elected members, partner organisations, and other local authorities.

The Council’s Corporate Management Board is led by the Chief Executive and includes the three Corporate Directors, the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

Bridgend County Borough Council

Delivering Together  
Our Corporate Plan 2023-28



## Political & Senior Leadership

The Council has 51 Councillors who are elected every five years by the community. They represent public interest as well as individuals living in the ward in which they have been elected. They represent the people of Bridgend County Borough and set the overall Council strategy and budget framework.

The **constitution** sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures to be followed. Each year, Council elects a Mayor to chair the Council, perform a civic role and promote the County. Council also appoints a Leader of the Council who appoints Cabinet Members, each with a responsibility for a specific portfolio of services. Cabinet is responsible for most major decisions, provides leadership, and proposes the budget framework and budget to Council.

## Governance & Accountability

The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet at least 4 times a year to scrutinise performance, budget and service developments, making recommendations on future policy and delivery of services.

The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting Committee, chaired by the Deputy Leader, meets quarterly to make important policy decisions on service provision for care experienced children and care leavers.

The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing is a member of the Council’s Corporate Management Board (CMB) and fortnightly Cabinet / Corporate Management Board (CCMB). CCMB and scrutiny oversee the directorate’s progress and performance against each of the Council’s key objectives. This governance ensures robust corporate leadership and a clear link between the directorate’s strategic and operational priorities and the Council’s overall objectives.

In the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate we monitor quality assurance, performance and management information monthly at team, service and directorate level. There is an in-depth quarterly performance and quality review of each group of services. This provides the Corporate Director and Heads of Service with robust and effective managerial oversight ensuring we are on-track to achieve the priorities of the Council’s corporate plan, the Directorate’s business plan, key statutory and local performance indicators and quality assurance activity.

# Workforce

## Recruitment & Retention

Retention and recruitment of the workforce is our top priority. A well-motivated, well supported, highly trained workforce is essential to high quality services and positive outcomes for the people we support.

SERVICE AREA	31st March 2024		31st March 2025	
	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount
Adult Social Care	592.01	765	571.39	734
Children and Family Services	245.06	289	352.43	405
Prevention and Wellbeing	28.21	33	25.73	30
Business Strategy, Performance and Improvement	67.12	71	72.74	77
Commissioning	12.62	13	9.62	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>945.03</b>	<b>1171</b>	<b>1031.91</b>	<b>1256</b>

Our total number of staff increased by 7% over the last year and 12% compared to March 2023. Children and Family Services increased by 16 staff members due to service configuration, improved recruitment and retention and a number of Early Help and Edge of Care Services transferring to the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate between April and July 2024.

We have implemented an effective retention and recruitment strategy and have significantly improved the workforce position across Social Services and Wellbeing, with improving recruitment, reduced vacancy rates and less reliance on agency workers. Since May 2023 the overall number of agency social worker staff has decreased by 62% from 77 in May 2023 to 29 in May 2025. Our retention rate has improved from 81% during quarter 4 of 2023-24 to 86% in 2024-25.

Sickness absence is higher than we would like with both Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care experienced an increase in the last year. Supporting staff wellbeing is important so we have promoted flexible working options and individual and team wellbeing. We work with human resources to manage sickness and absence through Council policies and ensure staff access the support they need. The importance of wellbeing is reflected in our staff survey with 93% of staff indicating that they know how to access support when needed and over 90% of staff feel supported by their manager.

# Growing Our Own

We work closely with schools and Bridgend College, providing positive information about careers in social care. We provide apprenticeships for people wishing to start a career in social care. We have a Social Services Practitioner programme which provides a pathway for people working in roles in social care to gain qualifications and, if they wish to do so, to progress towards the social work degree. Both programmes received positive feedback from managers.

Growing our own social workers helps make sure we have enough newly qualified social workers. We offer secondment and traineeship opportunities onto social work degree and master's programmes and staff who qualify via these routes remain employed with us for longer. In 2024, 6 staff members qualified as Social Workers and in 2025, 12 qualified and all were successful in securing a position with us.



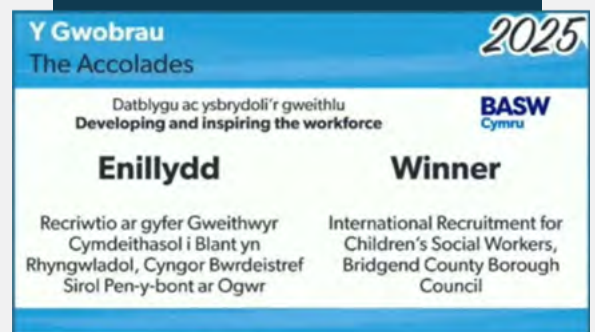
## Social Care Accolades 2025

In April 2022, we commenced a project to recruit international social workers to Children and Family Services. We recruited 13 workers who relocated between March 2023 and November 2024.

The project has been recognised as excellent practice, winning a 2025 Social Care Wales award in the 'developing and inspiring the workforce' category.

Two staff members were also nominated and were recognised as highly commended finalists. Ffion Cole, Principal Officer, Children and Family Services for the Inspirational Leadership award and Casey Baker, Social Care Worker, Adult Social Care for the WeCare Wales award.

More on why Ffion, Casey and the international recruitment project were nominated and recognised can be found [here](#).



# Staff Feedback

To understand the views and experiences of our workforce over the last year, we asked staff to complete a survey. Here is what they told us.

**91%**

Agree or strongly agree that they understand what is expected in their role

**85%**

Either agree or strongly agree that they can make a difference in their role

**69%**

Agree or strongly agree that they have the right tools and support to effectively undertake their role

**79%**

Agree or strongly agree that they have opportunities to contribute decisions within their team

**95%**

Agree or agreed to a certain extent that they can easily access training relevant to their post

**58%**

Feel they have the right opportunities available to progress their career in social care

**79%**

Agree or strongly agree that they feel supported by their manager

**89%**

Agree or strongly agree that they feel supported by the colleagues

**78%**

Reported their morale as either moderate, high or very high

**70%**

Feel valued at work

**93%**

Know how to access support if needed

**84%**

Would either recommend or maybe recommend working in social care in Bridgend

## What Next?

We are helping a broader range of people to enter careers in the social care sector through apprenticeships, work experience, and collaboration with schools, colleges and universities. We are also improving our marketing of social care careers, showing it as an attractive career option with high job satisfaction and good progression opportunities.

We intend to recruit people into social care roles based on their values, recognising that care is a vocation. This will help us develop a confident and healthy workforce and continue to reduce reliance on agency staff.

We have established our own Social Care Academi. The Academi offers staff, foster carers, carers and volunteers from across the Social Care sector

access to learning and development opportunities. This includes e-learning, on-line and in person training enabling individuals to develop the skills and knowledge needed to work effectively. For example, residential care staff who provide physical care and support for individuals have attended training on manual handling, medication awareness, health and safety and first aid. Our Social Workers have accessed training such as Safeguarding Children and Adults, Court Skills, Childrens Rights and Participation, Recording skills & Mental Health First Aid.

Academi staff work with schools, colleagues, careers and employability services to promote careers in care. The support people considering working in care with pre-employment training and work placement opportunities.

# Financial Resources

As reported in the Revenue Budget Outturn 2024-25 to Council on the 25th June 2025, the net budget for Adult and Children's Social Care was £102.916 million and the actual outturn was £103.925 million resulting in an over spend of £1.009 million.

SSWB	2024-25 Expenditure Budget £'000	2024-25 Income Budget £'000	2024-25 Net Budget £'000	2024-25 Actual Outturn £'000	2024-25 Actual Variance £'000
Older People (aged 65 and over)	44,527	(12,859)	31,668	31,082	(585)
Adults (aged under 65)	52,938	(11,876)	41,062	41,459	396
Childrens and Families Services	31,365	(1,179)	30,186	31,384	1,198
<b>Total</b>	<b>128,830</b>	<b>(25,914)</b>	<b>102,916</b>	<b>103,925</b>	<b>1,009</b>

In 2024-25 we continued to experience both service and financial pressures in children and family and adult services.

Independent residential placements are high cost and add pressure to the Children and Family Services' budget. The overall number of care experienced children decreased over the year, but the number in residential placements remained static. But as of 31st March, we were funding 19 placements when the budget only covers a maximum of 8. A very small number of placements are also "Operating without Registration" which also increases risk and financial pressures. Whilst these placements risks are managed they need higher staff

ratios and are more expensive.

Children and Family Services, along with all local councils in Wales must write a Placement Commissioning Strategy and update each year, explaining how we will provide care, housing and support for care experienced children. This strategy must also show how we will reduce and eventually stop using for-profit care providers in line with new duties under the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025. Although Welsh Government provides some funding, it does not cover all costs, which places additional financial pressure on us.

Within Adult Social Care there continues to be pressures in

learning disabilities and older people's services driven by complexity of need. This means that the people who access our services often have multiple needs that span a number of our services. An increase in our aging population also places additional financial pressure on services as more people need help and support for longer which increases costs linked to staff, time and additional resources to meet the demand.

To support us in addressing these ongoing pressures, in February 2025, Council approved £8.8 million in budget pressures for 2025-26 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2028-29:

## 2025-26 BUDGET PRESSURE ALLOCATION

Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities	£519,000
Mental Health Home Care	£679,000
Learning Disabilities Home Care	£325,000
Learning Disabilities Residential and Nursing Care Placement	£438,000
Older People Direct Payments	£369,000
Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment Home Care	£274,000
Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment Equipment	£266,000
Older People Supported Accommodation	£201,000
Ongoing pressures of Care Experienced Children	£3.250 million
Implications of Real Living Wage on commissioned contracts	£2.020 million

The Social Services Improvement Board is overseeing actions to address the service and financial pressures in the Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care budgets. Good progress has been made in the first year of the Children and Family Services 3 year strategic plan, approved in September 2023. A separate plan to make adult social care and support more sustainable was approved by Cabinet in November 2024. This followed a similar plan to sustainably improve children and family services approved by Cabinet in September 2023.

# 3

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

This section asks local authorities to address eight quality standards under four sections of People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration and Well-being.

This assessment is completed for both children and family services and adult services and describes how the local authority has aimed to achieve these standards throughout the year.

The self-assessment approach asks local authorities to address the following four questions:

### 1.

What do we know about the quality and impact of what we are doing?

### 2.

How do we know?  
e.g. what evidence from research, engagement and the metrics are we using to inform this assessment?

### 3.

What are we doing well and how can we do better?  
What are our priorities for improvement particularly over the coming year?

### 4.

What progress did we make on the areas for improvement identified in last year's report?  
What difference did we make?

Each section is split into an assessment of Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care and, where work has been taken across the whole of our Social Services and Wellbeing directorate the relevant section will start with an update called "Across Social Services and Wellbeing."

At the end of each of the 4 sections you will also find our priorities for 2025-26.



# People

## Quality Standards

“All people are equal partners who have **choice, voice and control** over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them”

“Effective **leadership** is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported **workforce** working towards a shared vision”

# Across Social Services

## Voice and Control

People’s views play an important role in helping us understand where we have done well and areas where we could do better. Engagement and involvement are at the centre of everything we do.

This year we have done a range of engagement and consultation exercises.



## Direct Payments

Direct payments help people have more flexibility and control in how their care and support is delivered.



The graph shows there was a 3% decrease in the number of adults receiving a direct payment at 31st March 2025, and an 18% increase in the number of children and young people. A review of direct payments has been completed and a policy and guidance developed. A clear and consistent approach to the use of direct payments is in place from January 2025.

# Advocacy Support

Advocates help make sure that the rights, needs and voice of people are heard.

Below is a table noting the number of “Active Offers” of advocacy support to children and adults during the year, and the number who then went on to receive support from an advocate.

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Number of 'Active Offers' of advocacy for <b>children</b> during the year	78	71	54
Of which, number of <b>children</b> where an Independent Professional Advocate was provided	70	64	39
Number of <b>adults</b> where the need for an Independent Professional Advocate was identified	181	125	102
Of which, number of <b>adults</b> where an Independent Advocate was provided	173	87	67

The table shows a decrease in the offer of an advocate in both service areas compared to 2023-24.

The 24% decrease in children being offered an advocate is due to a decrease in the number of children becoming care experienced and those being subject to an initial child protection conference. Focused work to increase the delivery

of the active offer for eligible children has been done and data has improved between September and March 2024.

Within adult social care our advocacy services have not had enough capacity to take on new referrals. To improve this position, we will undertake a review of the delivery of this contract to reflect current demands.

## Supporting Effective Leadership

We have worked across the directorate in the following areas to support effective leadership.

### Workforce Development

A workforce development plan has been created to improve the experience of our workforce so they feel well supported and valued. We achieve the right balance of skills and experience in our teams and retain and recruit a high standard of practitioner to our service.

Our retention and recruitment strategy is working, providing a clear opportunities for the provision of mentoring support and training opportunities for managers. Mentoring support through Social Care Wales and our improvement partner has helped with our succession planning.

### Management and Leadership Pathway

Our management and leadership development pathway and program is part of our support for all managers to develop their skills in leading teams and services.

We worked with our improvement partner to deliver a bespoke management and leadership development programme and first line managers have been offered the ILM Level 3 Award in Leadership and Management.

# Children and Family Services

## Voice and Control

### Understanding Family Engagement

We have focussed our quality assurance on understanding how well care and support plans provide evidence of how children, young people and their families participated in shaping their plans and that the plans focussed on what mattered to those involved. We concluded that our care and support plans evidenced the voice of the child and that both the child and family were clearly involved in their plans.

We have embedded the 'signs of safety' model of practice. We have also sustainably reduced children's social worker caseloads. This has supported practitioners to build relationships with children and families spending more time working directly with them. It helps them understand their strengths and connections and developing safety plans that are owned by those involved. Signs of safety places the family at the heart of decision making. An independent review has confirmed that we are providing the right support at the right time. This helps us understand the child and family even in situations where an immediate response to safeguarding is required.

### CASE STUDY: Signs of Safety in Practice

A 14 year old Child A, was referred to Children and Family Services in 2023 due to concerns about exploitation, fractious family relationships and going missing. These circumstances saw A move from their parent's care into local authority foster care, moving 4 times during 2023-24. A was known to use substances and there was continued concern for their safety and well-being.

A was allocated a social worker and in December 2024 the social worker and the safeguarding team asked for support to run a Signs of Safety family network meeting to move towards re-uniting the family. The consultant social worker supported the family and professionals to engage in a mapping exercise to consider what was working well, worries, complicating factors and next steps for A, to build a family led safety plan that worked for both A and their family.

During the meeting, family and professionals worked together to establish the risks and worries through "Danger Statements", developing safety goals and identifying areas of strength and safety. The meeting was rich in discussion and by working jointly with A and their family, a co-produced plan was established to support A in moving home in a safe and planned way.

By January 2025 A returned home to their parent's care. They worked together to ensure the family felt equipped to keep A safe. The support offered by the social worker, the residential home and Youth Offending Service, supported the successful reunification and in April 2025 A was safely removed from the child protection register due to the positive progress made.

A's story shows the positive outcomes that can be achieved through the collaborative, relational, strengths based social work which in Children and Family Services is achieved through the Signs of Safety model. The social worker has been praised by A's Independent Reviewing Officer for being child focussed and relational in their social work practice.

## Story Panel

We now have a ‘story panel’ where stories can be shared to hear the lived experience of families. It allows us to reflect and review the effectiveness of what we do and the impact of our involvement. Below is an example of stories shared.

Hearing these stories and lived experiences helps us to reflect and consider how effective our current policies are in promoting ‘what matters’ conversations and positive outcomes that are led by the child and their family.



# Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

## Supporting Practice Framework Implementation

Over the last year we completed a training needs analysis. It looked at how our training programme focusses on the needs of our workforce to ensure the best possible support is provided to children and their families.

This analysis has helped us to strengthen our practice and develop family safety plans that support sustainable long-term approaches and move away from short term service plans.

Over 180 members of our workforce are now trained in our ‘signs of safety’ practice model.

### ‘Most Significant Change’

The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) model helps us gather feedback from people we work with to show how our services are making a difference. These stories tell us things we may miss with facts and figures alone and helps us understand how effective our services are and how to improve them in a more person centred way.

Within Children and Family Services we ran a pilot using the MSC model to support care experienced children and their families in voicing what matters to them to support reunification and build lasting long-term relationships. This pilot enabled us to understand the impact of our work, was positively received and will be rolled out further across the service.

We have appointed a Signs of Safety Consultant Social Worker to embed this model across the service and a Workforce Development Officer who has provided internal training and will now focus on training partners.

# Adult Social Care

## Voice and Control

To ensure the people of Bridgend have control over what matters to them, we design services alongside them and make sure they are targeted to the needs of local communities.

### Better Together Bridgend

Better together Bridgend is a partnership between people with a learning disability, supported by People First, support providers and the council. The partnership has co-produced a plan to improve services in Bridgend.

The group has a programme board chaired by a person with a learning disability. The workstreams of Better Together Bridgend include work on developing day opportunities by developing a hub and spoke model around the community hubs, extending the take up of annual health checks for people with learning disabilities, and support for parents to create a parents' forum.

### Having a Say Group

The Having a Say Group began back in 2022, bringing together people with learning disabilities who are living in their own homes supported by staff working under the umbrella of BCBC Supported Living services. It began as an opportunity for an informal get together for people to socialise, see friends and re-establish their networks in person following the restrictions and isolation they felt during COVID but the group has evolved into strong, supportive networks. People plan social events and parties, invite other groups to come and share information about their services; these have ranged from charities and advocacy groups to BCBC's safeguarding team and Contracts Monitoring team.

Through the meetings and events people have built meaningful connections and collaborative relationships; these inclusive approaches have helped people to place lived experiences at the heart of the discussions, decision-making and their own personal development.

At each meeting people have the opportunity to share good news, celebrate achievements, and recognise the everyday successes that often go unnoticed; by sharing experiences they have developed environments that value encouragement and support. Alongside sharing positive updates, the group also provides a space for people to reflect on learning experiences. From overcoming barriers to navigating support systems, people are empowered to share their stories and help other learn. These open discussions help with people's understanding and also spark conversations about how services can improve and better meet people's needs.

The minutes and action log are produced in easy read form.

The group is now supporting our safeguarding team with the development of communication and accessible information for vulnerable people living in Bridgend.

# HAVE YOUR SAY! 25/7/25 ①



██████ WAS HAPPY TO SEE HER FRIENDS AT THE MEETING.



██████ AND ██████ ARE LOOKING FOR A HOUSE TOGETHER.




EVERYONE IS ENJOYING THE TEA/COFFEE AND BISCUITS!



CLARE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES VISITED TO MEET EVERYONE. SHE TOLD US WHAT SHE DID AND LIKES TO LISTEN TO EVERYONE.



██████ HAS BEEN PLAYING IN POOL TOURNAMENTS.



██████ IS LOOKING FORWARD TO HER 40th NEXT YEAR!



██████ IS HAPPY TO BE ABLE TO SEE EVERYONE!



██████ IS NEW TO THE GROUP! WELCOME ██████!

25/7/25



██████ IS LOOKING FOR A NEW PHONE AND PLANNING A HOLIDAY.



██████ WENT ON A CANAL BOAT AND HAD SOME LOVELY CAKES!

██████ HAD COCKTAILS AND SAW SOME SHOWS!



LEON AND BETH WERE VISITING US! THEY TOLD US HOW THEY CAN HELP US! THEY ARE FROM SAFEGUARDING.



THEY ARE CREATING A FOCUS GROUP AND ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS.



WE WILL WORK TOGETHER!

LEON WILL ARRANGE A PRESENTATION TO GIVE MORE INFORMATION.



THANK YOU FOR COMING!  
 SEE YOU NEXT TIME!

THERE MAY BE AN AWARDS CEREMONY. WHAT AWARDS SHOULD WE HAVE?

## The Welsh Language

“Mwy Na Geiriau / More Than Just Words” is a strategic framework produced by Welsh Government, which along with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 promotes Welsh language and culture in social services, social care and health across Wales.

It is important that the people we work with have an opportunity to communicate in their language of choice.

### CASE STUDY:

## Mwy Na Geiriau / More than Just Words

Adult A’s first and preferred language is Welsh. As a result of this, A’s capacity assessment was completed in Welsh, where discussions with their family also took place in Welsh due to this being their preferred and first language.

A enjoyed interacting with the practitioner in Welsh, held their hand and was smiling throughout the assessment process.

The outcome of the assessment was that A lacked capacity regarding their hospital discharge plans but enjoyed the opportunity to interact with someone in the language they understood best.

The family advised that A had only spoken to them in Welsh. As a family, they were also pleased to be supported by the practitioner through the medium of Welsh during the difficult time of navigating the hospital discharge process.

## Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

Training and development have been targeted across a number of our services to ensure we are providing opportunities for staff to develop their skills and are suitably qualified to undertake their roles. Some areas of training delivered during the year are highlighted below.

### Strength Based / Outcome Focused Practice Model

We delivered training to support consistent implementation of our model of practice to ensure it is embedded across the service. This is reinforced in supervision and peer support.

Fortnightly meetings are held to monitor the performance and impact of the model and make sure it is consistent across all areas of the service.



## Falls Prevention

Falls prevention training for support workers highlights the main causes of falls and their impact on older adults. It gives practical information and advice on what can be done to reduce the risk of falls.

The training has been delivered to all our domiciliary care staff, carers in care homes and has been adapted to support community staff from third sector partners, Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) and Care and Repair. Training is currently being delivered to independent domiciliary care providers in the area, with training being provided to 325 people during the year.

## Telecare/ Technology Enhanced Care

The telecare e-learning module is now mandatory and forms part of the induction for all staff ranging from carers to social workers. It has enabled staff to be more aware of telecare and to recognise equipment when they are in a person's home so that they can contact the telecare team if they identify any technical issues. The module also gives guidance on how to complete a telecare referral correctly so that delays can be avoided.

The telecare team have been pro-active in setting up monthly 'just checking' drop-in sessions for practitioners so that diagnostic data can be used as part of the assessment process to right size packages of care. Meetings have also been set-up with all the social work teams to help raise the profile of technology enabled care to support our frontline services to free-up care capacity.

# People: 2025-26 Key Priorities

### ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Co-design and support community based health and wellbeing activities across both Awen and Halo partnerships.

Work with carers who have a caring responsibility for loved ones, family members with a dementia diagnosis to develop a carers networks and understand what is needed.

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Continue to implement our workforce plans to make sure we keep continue to build on good process in the recruitment and retention of staff.

Continue to train and support our staff to use the signs of safety model of practice across all areas of the service.

### ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Complete an evidence based review of the Bridgend Resource Centre and review capital and revenue opportunities for optimal use of community buildings across the borough.

Deliver a comprehensive rolling training and development programme to support the consistent implementation of the adult social care model of practice, to ensure it is embedded across the service.

Develop a business justification case for a 'core and cluster' model of supported living for people with learning disabilities at the Sunnyside site.

# Prevention

## Quality Standards

“The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is **prevented** whilst ensuring that the best **outcomes** for people are achieved”

“**Resilience within communities** is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including **carers** to learn develop and participate in society”

# Across Social Services

## Promoting Resilient Communities

Our 3 year strategic plans for children and families and adults emphasise the importance of prevention and early intervention in keeping families together, supporting independence and connection to friends, family and community.

Our Prevention and Wellbeing Service and Early Help and Edge of Care Services, our healthy living, cultural trust and third sector partners play an important role in helping us support people within their communities by working with to stop problems getting worse and people needing long term care and support from social services.

## Resilient and Connected Communities

The 'Building Resilient and Co-ordinated Communities' programme supports individual and community well-being. It is a cross sector programme with Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) and the broader third sector, to support individual and community well-being. This partnership approach has secured Regional Partnership investment to address areas such as loneliness and isolation, connecting people to support within communities, developing carer well-being and building community networks of common purpose (e.g. disability, older adults).

Local Community Connectors (LCCs) form part of our Prevention and Wellbeing Service. They aim to support a person's independence by providing support to avoid or delay the need for statutory care by promoting individual strength and resilience. They recognise and support the value of individual gifts, skills and assets, the powerful and positive role of families and relationships and the contribution that local communities can make as an alternative to professional health and social care services.

# Resilient and Connected Communities: 2024-25 Summary

## THE BUILDING RESILIENT AND CO-ORDINATED COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME:

Signposted **2288** people to relevant services

Supported **564** people to make new friends or improve their support networks.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY CONNECTORS:

Supported **272** organisations to develop or deliver preventative opportunities based on “what matters” conversations

Noted **137** people attending network meetings

Reported **587** people had increased social connections

## NEXT STEPS:

Build stronger cohesive partnerships across the 3rd sector

Hold workshops with referring partners to ensure the right people are being referred to the right service

Strengthen engagement with early help services to help inform and shape the family support offer

Ensure capacity to support the needs of those signposted to the community

## Carer Wellbeing

We offer a range of services to support carers across the borough.

- The **Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service**, delivered by the charity TuVida, supports unpaid carers in Bridgend. It provides a range of services including advice on caring, access to breaks, support groups, free training, carer grants, and health and wellbeing support. The service aims to help carers manage their caring role while maintaining their own health and wellbeing. Over the year the service received 553 referrals, with 1522 carers supported or signposted to a relevant service.
- The Halo Carers respite programme delivered 9 community sessions, providing 18 hours of replacement care and had 60 attendances.
- Over the year, Cwmpas have supported 83 unpaid carers to access local support.
- The peer mentoring project run in partnership with **Bridgend Carers Centre** for young carers aged 7 to 25. It gave 57 young carers the chance to make new friends, feel like they belong and be less lonely. All young carers told us they feel better in themselves, with improved mental health, more confidence, higher self-esteem and improved life skills.

Over the next year we will create a strategic carers group within Bridgend to ensure the views of all unpaid carers are heard and acted upon to co-produce a carers strategy. The groups will include representatives from the Council and carer representatives from 3rd sector organisations.

# Young Carers

The Bridgend Young Carers Network is a partnership between the Council, Bridgend Carers Centre, Whitehead Ross, Tu-Vida, Awen, Halo, Bridgend Inclusive Network Group, BAVO, Bridgend College and primary and secondary schools across the borough.

The network began its journey in 2022 and has continued to grow, providing a platform for young carers and young adult carers to have their voices heard and needs addressed. It is led by young carer ambassadors aged 11 to 25 years who play a vital role in leading activities and generating interest in joining the network.

The group has grown from 3 to 17 ambassadors all playing a crucial role in co-designing and supporting the voice of other young carers to be heard and acted on, whilst breaking down barriers for young carers to thrive and reach their full potential. While many young carers excel at home, perform well academically and maintain strong friendships, others face significant challenges and require additional support.

One of the main obstacles they encounter is finding the time and space to focus on their own health and well-being. The Bridgend Young Carer Network organises termly events that bring young carers together to share experiences, learn from one another, and make new friends.

Young carers and care-experienced parents are being identified earlier and supported in ways that help them stay healthy, manage responsibilities, and remain in education or work. These community-focused supports are helping build resilience and reduce pressure on statutory services.

# Support for Young Carers

Supported by the Healthy Living Partnership

- 294 Young Carers are accessing a Halo Membership.
- 549 Young Carer ID cards have been issued.

**17** Young Carer Ambassadors in schools across the borough.

**167** primary school children are involved, and **381** comprehensive and young adult carers.

**154** Young Carers attended “We are valued” days, supported by educational settings.

## NEXT STEPS

To further support young carers we will:

Create a series of short advocacy films for schools to improve school-based staff’s awareness in this area

Continue to strengthen relationships with young carers and adult and parent carers groups.

# Young Carers Event

The Young Carers Network currently supports 146 young carers. In March 2025 they held an event which not only offered an opportunity for young carers to gather information to help with their caring role but gave them time for themselves.

It is also provided an opportunity for Young Carers to have time away from their responsibilities, their caring role, school and any other pressure they may be experiencing.



# Children and Family Services

## Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

### Early Intervention and Prevention

Early Help and Edge of Care joined Children and Family Services between April and July 2024. New referral processes were implemented in September 2024 in line with our ‘no wrong door’ principle of people accessing the right support from the right person at the right time.



### Early Help Services

**Early Help** is a preventative service which focusses on spotting and addressing issues at the first opportunity. It helps build trusted relationships and provides the right support at the right time to reduce more intensive support at a later date. The service provides a range of support.

For more information on the impact of Early Help, please refer to the Well-being section of this report.

# Edge of Care

**Edge of Care** provides services to families who are already in receipt of care and support to help them make the necessary changes to prevent children from becoming care experienced, focussing on 6 key areas.

## EDGE OF CARE SERVICES



### RAPID RESPONSE

Short term support for children and families in crisis



### CONNECTING FAMILIES

Medium term support for children and families where there are concerns about children's safety



### BABY IN MIND

Intensive pre and post birth support for families and wider networks to ensure the baby can remain in the care of the family safely



### INTEGRATED FAMILY SUPPORT

Long term support for families affected by trauma



### DADS SUPPORT WORKER

One to One or group support to develop fathers' relationships with their children



### RISE

Long term support for families whose children have been placed into care and subsequently adopted

## ANALYSIS OF EDGE OF CARE: 2024-25

**222** referrals were received by Edge of Care during the year

**92%** of families who engaged with the service were successfully supported to prevent children and young people from entering care

### CONNECTING FAMILIES

97 cases in total

85 families received support

**96% of cases successfully supported**

### BABY IN MIND

28 families

28 families received support

**82% of cases successfully supported through trauma-informed support**

### INTEGRATED FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

22 cases in total

**86% of cases successfully supported**

### RAPID RESPONSE

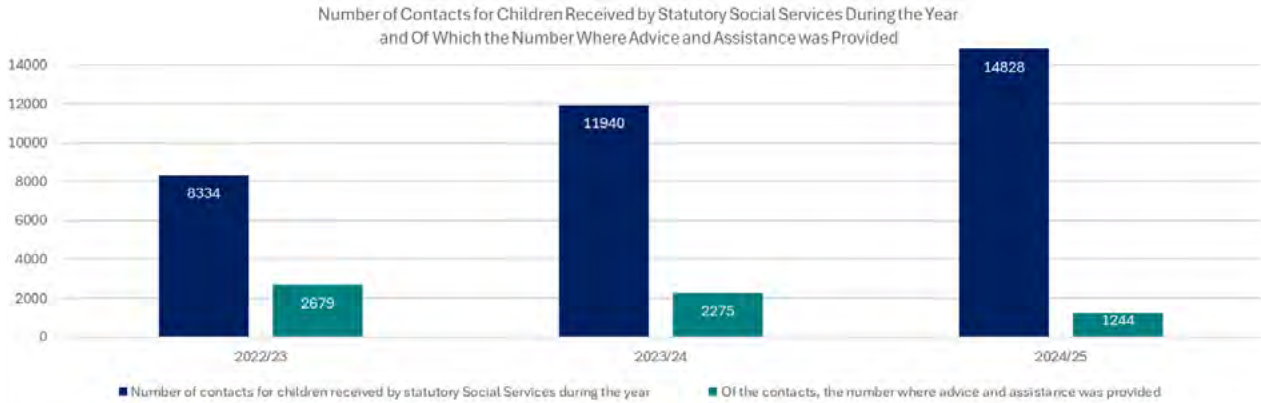
61 cases in total

**95% of cases successfully supported**



# Contacts to the Service

Over the last year the number of contacts received by Children and Family Services increased by 24%.



However, whilst contacts have increased the proportion of contacts where advice and assistance was required has decreased from 19% of all contacts received in 2023-24 to 8% in 2024-25. This demonstrates the impact of our drive to focus on early intervention and prevention via non statutory (social services) support.

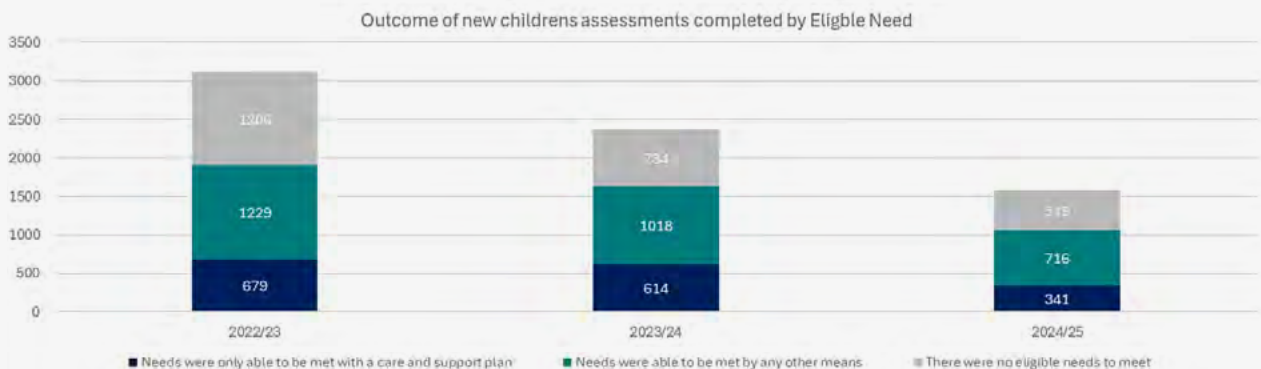
With early help co-located within MASH and locality safeguarding hubs, the ability to ensure children and families get the right support from the right service

has increased in the last 12 months. To demonstrate this between January to March 2025 there were 237 referrals received into Early Help which equates to a 22.8% increase when compared to the same period in 2024.

We have identified a need to separate referrals and contacts. Classifying all contacts as a referral makes our figures appear greater than other local authorities, as a number of referrals can be related to the same incident.

# Care and Support Assessments

Over the year we completed 1576 new care and support assessments for children and young people which is a 34% decrease compared to 2023-24.



The decrease in assessments demonstrates the effectiveness of our Signs of Safety screening tool which has assisted clearer decision making alongside our drive for early intervention via preventative approaches. Overall, 45% of new assessments were able to be supported outside of statutory services compared to 43% in 2023-24.

Following a recent independent review of front door arrangements, it was confirmed that practice and decision making is safe and reflects our model of practice. We have identified a range of areas including threshold, decision-making and joint working for improvement.

# Adult Social Care

## Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

Intervening early and preventing escalation of need helps people to remain independent where possible. To promote independence a number of initiatives were introduced across our community based services.

### Home Care Remodelling: The Support at Home Journey

We have improved Support at Home - increasing the effectiveness of short-term interventions for people in the community to reduce or eliminate the need for longer-term care at home.

We have upskilled all care staff who now work in dedicated localities to increase care capacity and reduce travel time. We also aimed to assess 75% of people who appeared to require care and support via the Support at Home Assessment Team. By mapping people's current provision, we were able to create 3 v locality support networks. Each network comprises of a Team Leader and 2 co-ordinators each supported by a number of dedicated direct care staff. The new structure was introduced in October 2024.

The new model has enabled a much more efficient and effective response to identifying and providing support. It has supported people to maintain their independence by providing an opportunity to access reablement services, and, where care and support is required ensure it is proportionate to the person's needs. During 2024-25, 509 people completed a period of reablement, an increase of 35% when compared to 2024-25 where 377 people completed a period of reablement.

Next steps are, provide further training to upskill care staff in improved reablement practices and pursue a vision for a multi-disciplinary service at the front door of adult services to increase the earlier interventions.

## Bed to Chair: A Rehabilitation Project for Adults with Complex, Long-term Conditions

It was recognised that some people who require therapy led reablement required more support.

To address these gaps, we have provided community based support for people most at risk of admission to hospital or long-term care via reablement interventions.

The project has had a positive impact both on individuals and the service. By increasing capacity at the early stages of the referral process and providing more timely intervention, not only have people retained independence and improved their wellbeing but their risk of being admitted to hospital was reduced, which will reduce the reliance on long term care and support

### CASE STUDY:

## Care Home Avoidance

Adult B lives in sheltered accommodation and was referred to a Social Worker for admittance to a care home due to increasing self-neglect resulting in significant health problems. B was declining care from the current care agency and was at risk of being evicted from their sheltered accommodation.

B was discussed in the Multi-disciplinary Team and an assessment focussed on what mattered to B. A plan was put in place to allow them to remain in their sheltered accommodation and reduce the risks. This included:

- a Therapy Technician program designed by the Occupational Therapist.
- a recliner chair purchased.
- a physiotherapy program commenced on strength-based work
- and a mobility aid ordered and strength built to access the toilet independently.

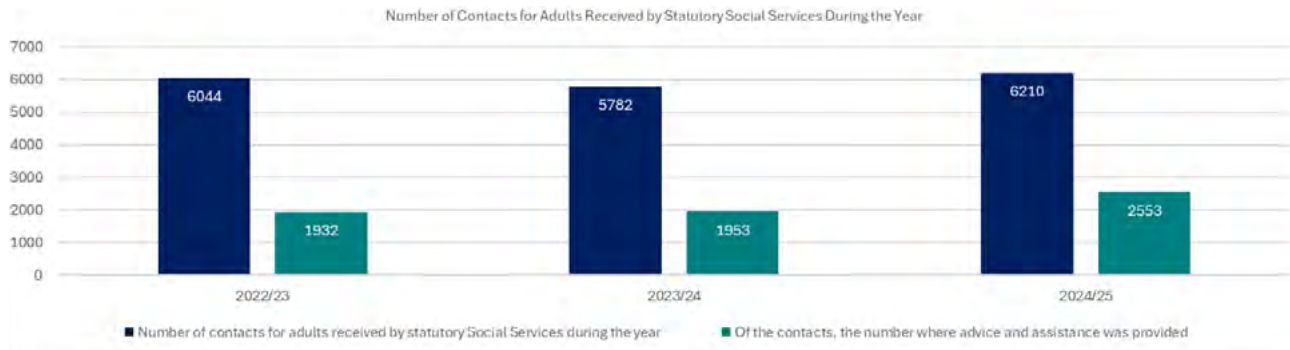
This meant that B's care calls were able to be reduced from 4 to 2 per day, the district nurse support was withdrawn and through the Social Worker, the Care Agency was changed and a new program of care designed introducing reablement approaches.

This approach meant that B was able to remain in their home and be as independent as they could be. This was a much better outcome for B as well as making saving on care home fees for the local authority.

There were 495 people supported by the local authority in care home placements at the end of March 2025 compared with 524 at the end of March 2024 which demonstrates the outcomes from this targeted work with our most vulnerable citizens. This achievement is particularly positive given the growing and ageing population in Bridgend

# Contacts to the Service

There was a 7% increase in new contacts received during 2024-25 compared to 2023-24.

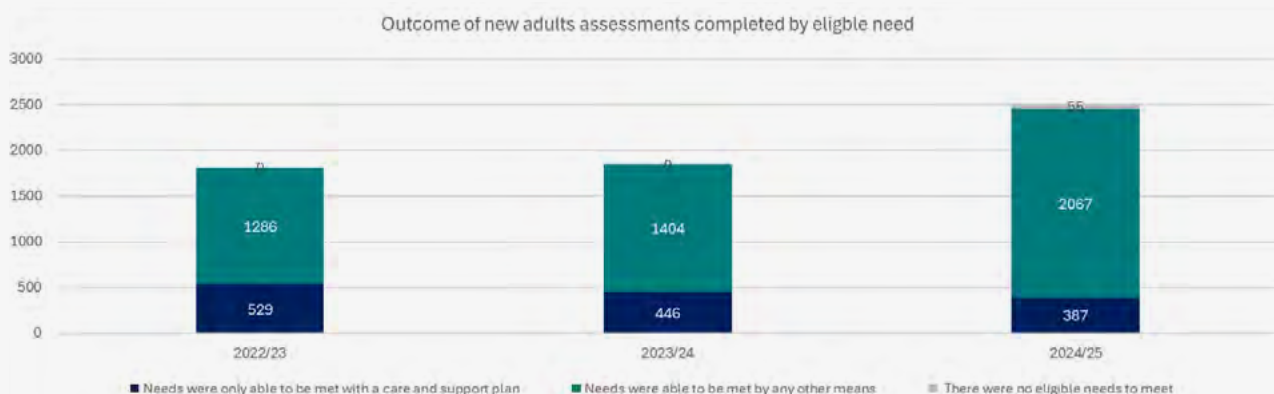


Over the latter part of the year, we implemented a change to the processes of our Early Intervention and Prevention Hub (EIPH), with contacts being directed via our Corporate Front Door.

Whilst the increase in those receiving advice and support has increased in line with the increase in overall contacts our work with the Council’s Corporate Front Door ensures only those contacts requiring social care assistance are being handled by the EIPH service.

# Care and Support Assessments

During 2024-25, 2509 new care and support assessments for adults were completed, which is an increase of 37% when compared to the previous year.



This data now includes the new proportionate assessment completed by the EIPH. The reduction in the number of assessments resulting in a care and support plan is positive indication that practitioners are effectively using the “Strengths Based, Outcome Focused” approach during assessments.

The need for care and support plans have decreased as we are working with people to understand their strengths and resources which reduces the necessity for some people to have a care and support plan to have their needs met.

# The Reablement Service

As stated earlier, the total number of reablement packages provided during the year rose by 35%, as a result of the remodelling of the Support at Home service which is described above.

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Reablement Packages that <b>mitigated</b> the need for support	67%	67%	56%
Reablement Packages that <b>reduced</b> the need for support	12%	14%	17%
% of Reablement packages that <b>maintained</b> the need for the same level of support	15%	14%	16%
% of Reablement packages <b>that neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated</b> the need for support	7%	5%	11%

Whilst there has been a positive impact for those people whose needs were maintained there has been a small decrease in those whose needs were reduced or avoided. The service has observed that the level of need of the people accessing reablement has increased

# Delayed Pathways of Care

The number of people delayed in their transfer of care on the 'discharge to recover and assess' pathway has decreased from 104 in 2023-24 to 70 in 2024-25.

This information is a count of people on a set census day each month who are still in hospital 48 hours after a clinician has determined that they are medically fit to return home. These improvements have been achieved despite our workforce working across multiple hospital sites due to the major works required at the Princess of Wales Hospital.

# Prevention: 2025-26 Key Priorities

## ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Preventative services to connect people to community based support.

Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service to support referrals and conduct what matters conversations.

Strategic group created to support unpaid carers and identify objectives within the carers action plan.

Community based activity offers for carers developed with Halo and Awen and 3rd sector partners.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Implement our commissioning strategies for Family Support and Children with disabilities.

Reduce the number of care experienced children and reunify children with their families whenever it is safe to do so.

Implement our placement commissioning strategy and reduce our use of unregistered placements.

Continue with the remodelling of fostering services so that we retain the carers we already have and recruit into the local authority.

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Strategic group created to support unpaid carers to improve the way we work with adult carers.

Carry out a review of the assisted recovery in the community service in partnership with CTMUHB and other stakeholders.

# Partnership and Integration

## Quality Standards

“Effective **partnerships** are in place to commission and fully deliver fully **integrated**, high quality sustainable outcomes for people”

“People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as **equal partners**”

# Across Social Services

At a local level, several of our services are integrated with key partners.

## Regional Arrangements

We have a number of regional partnerships that work across the whole of the service.

We work closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB), Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and other partners in the Regional Partnership. The aim of the [Regional Partnership](#) is to improve the wellbeing, health and social care services of people living across the 3 areas. The Deputy Leader of BCBC is the chair of the Regional Partnership

To ensure we have effective arrangements in place to protect all people of all ages from harm, with our regional partners we are a member of the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board](#).

## Local Arrangements

At a local level, several of our services are integrated with key partners.

The Bridgend Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH) co-locates our Children and Family Services and Adult Safeguarding teams with a number of agencies including South Wales Police, education and probation to provide a collaborative approach to safeguarding across the borough. More information on Bridgend MASH can be found on our [website](#).

In Adult Social Care our Integrated Cluster Network Teams work jointly with CTMUHB to deliver services to people within the community. Our integrated approach for adults is based across 3 'networks.' These bring together a range of social care and community health professionals to meet the needs of people with chronic and long-term conditions.

Each network covers a geographical area of the county aligned with our GP surgeries. This ensures that people receive integrated care within their communities which can adapt as their needs change. Taking a multidisciplinary approach means that we can respond to issues that arise quickly, preventing things getting worse. Taking a holistic approach to meeting people's needs and working closely with their families ensures they don't need to repeat their story to multiple professionals and ensures they have greater choice and control in the way their care is delivered.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PARTNER:

“Trust and confidence in the child protection arrangements in Bridgend faced considerable pressure following several high-profile child deaths. Bridgend Children’s Services played a pivotal role in this response and, in my view, deserve significant recognition

Upon identifying that certain aspects of the arrangements required improvement, they engaged fully and transparently with partners. While performance data can often be a sensitive matter, Bridgend was proactive in discussing in granular detail the areas that needed attention. This openness allowed partners to provide constructive feedback and gain a comprehensive understanding of the interdependencies at play.

In keeping with the commitment to trust and transparency, there was positive engagement with practitioners across all agencies. This inclusive approach ensured that challenges were openly discussed, and all practitioners had the opportunity to contribute to the development of solutions.

While there is always room for improvement, and we should continually strive to deliver the best possible service to our most vulnerable, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) quickly adopted the stance that such progress must be built on a foundation of trust, confidence, and a shared understanding of the barriers, challenges, and strategic goals.”

Detective Superintendent  
SOUTH WALES POLICE

# Third Sector Arrangements

Our Prevention and Wellbeing Service works with third sector partners, Awen Cultural Trust and Halo Leisure in the delivery of leisure, cultural and wellbeing services. These are key to supporting preventative services for children, young people, adults their families and carers.

Our partners have had a successful year:

- In June 2024, Halo’s Healthy Living Partnership, including the Council and other partners, received an excellent rating following an assessment by QUEST. QUEST is a quality assurance scheme for the sport and leisure industry measuring national standards and for service planning. Receiving this rating demonstrates BCBC and Halo’s commitment to providing high-quality services and customer satisfaction.
- Awen libraries which is managed the Awen Cultural Trust in Partnership with the Council was named Welsh Library of The Year at the 2025 British Book Awards. The award recognises libraries who bring the world of books to the wider community.



# Addressing the Gaps in Social Care

In April 2024, Cabinet approved three commissioning strategies across the key population areas, which set out our priority areas and commissioning intentions over the next 5 years.

The strategies were developed using analysis from Population Needs Assessments and Market Stability Reports produced in 2022/23, as well as local data to identify key trends about the people of Bridgend and our services. This data has enabled us to understand how our current services are performing and to project future service requirements over the coming years.

Some of the key areas of work identified in the commissioning strategies included the development of a Placement Commissioning Strategy in Children and Family Services as well as a detailed Accommodation-Based Service review, and a review of Daytime Opportunities within Adult Social Care

A Children and Families Placement Commissioning strategy has been submitted to Welsh Government and our key priorities include:

- Enhancing our Residential Provision
- Increasing Supported lodgings and Supported accommodation options
- Reducing our independent high-cost residential use.
- Eliminating Operating Without Registration use

We have also started a project to remodel our fostering services. The aims of this are to:

- Increase the number and diversity of Foster Wales Bridgend carers.
- Improve carer recruitment conversion and reduce terminations.
- Enhance carer support, wellbeing and retention.

- Reduce reliance on Independent Foster Agencies and residential placements.
- Embed carer voice through consistent communication and Foster Carer charter delivery.

Within Adult Social Care, we completed an accommodation mapping exercise, the findings of which were approved by Cabinet in March 2025. Key priority areas identified include the development of a new extra care service in the south of the county borough, and to ensure service accommodation provision (both internal and commissioned) is able to meet increasing complexities and increasing dementia rates moving forward.

The key next steps are to finalise business cases in these priority areas in order to help secure any capital and revenue available to support the developments needed.

There has also been a review of daytime opportunities in Bridgend, which have been approved by Cabinet, where the following priority areas were identified.

- A progressive and enabling service, enabling people to progress/realise their potential or move to their next stage of care
- Meaningful occupation for younger adults going through transition and adults of working age
- Carer respite and high-quality care, support and meaningful activity for those with the most complex needs
- Community connection to meet the social needs of people with care and support needs

Over the next year we will continue to develop and mobilise children’s residential care as set out in the business justification case and Placement Commissioning Strategy and continue to improve the way we support foster carers to improve our retention and recruitment of foster carers.

# Children and Family Services

## Effective Partnerships

### Mental Health Support for Children and Young People

We developed a multi-agency action plan with CTMUHB, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr County Borough Councils to improve mental health support for children and young people.

This has led to better joint working between the health board and local authorities. We are jointly developing an approach that ensures children and families access emotional wellbeing support from the right service at the right time. This regional approach will be termed SPACE and is intending to go live in January 2026.

#### CASE STUDY:

### Working with Health to Safeguard from Harm

Child B was hospitalised following self-harming themselves. Their parent was extremely concerned about how to safeguard B from any harm with worries that a further attempt would be made to harm themselves again.

Health and Social Services worked together to hold risk management meetings and be clear about what risks were evident and how they were being managed. Health clearly outlined their risk assessment and rationale about why community support was the best course of action for B.

It was a concerning situation, but partners worked well together with clear roles and responsibilities. B remains with a family member and is being supported by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and social services to recover from their experiences and safeguard from harm.

### Homelessness

We have developed plans to improve the response to care leavers who experience homelessness. Working closely with our housing partners we intend to develop a joint protocol to address and try and prevent these issues from occurring in the future.

We have also been developing additional supported accommodation options for care leavers to ensure smooth transitions for children and young people into adulthood.

# People As Equal Partners

## Family Support Services Commissioning Strategy and Young People

Due to increased demand on our statutory services, our improvement partner reviewed current services and local needs.

They identified clear areas of focus to enhance preventative services and alleviate pressure on statutory support and ensure children and families access the right support at the right time.

As part of this review, a Family Commissioning Strategy was developed which clearly sets out 6 key areas for Early Help, Edge of Care and partner agencies to focus on over the next 2 years.

### FAMILY COMMISSIONING STRATEGY: KEY PRIORITIES

<p><b>1. STREAMLINED SERVICES</b></p> <p>Integrate Early Help, MASH, and Social Work into a single front door</p> <p>Develop clear referral routes and aligned access, assessment, and planning pathways</p> <p>Promote a "no wrong door" approach for families and professionals</p>	<p><b>2. MORE INTENSIVE TARGETED SUPPORT</b></p> <p>Expand Tier 3 services for families with complex needs</p> <p>Equip Family Support staff with skills to deliver sustained, high-impact intervention</p> <p>Reduce reliance on statutory services by offering earlier intensive help</p>	<p><b>3. PARENTING SUPPORT REFORM</b></p> <p>Shift from general parenting programmes to targeted, evidence-based interventions</p> <p>Increase coaching-style, one-to-one support for families at risk</p> <p>Commission new models and partners to deliver intensive support</p>
<p><b>4. SUPPORT FOR OLDER CHILDREN &amp; ADOLESCENTS</b></p> <p>Address rising demand related to family conflict, exploitation, and school exclusion</p> <p>Develop flexible and responsive support offers, including out-of-hours provision</p> <p>Build capacity to reduce unplanned care entry for teenagers</p>	<p><b>5. SUPPORT FOR NEURODIVERSE CHILDREN &amp; MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS</b></p> <p>Collaborate with NHS to invest in support for complex neurodevelopmental and emotional needs</p> <p>Create intensive family support pathways tailored to these young people</p> <p>Reduce pressure on families and prevent breakdown</p>	<p><b>6. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS &amp; PRACTICE MODEL</b></p> <p>Embed trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches and Signs of Safety</p> <p>Promote true partnership working with families, reducing over-reliance on services</p> <p>Strengthen understanding of the local support system among staff</p>

The strategy will support collaboration with communities and local organisations to build a broader network of support for families, in ways that are more familiar and rooted in their own communities. We are starting to see stronger relationships between local services, voluntary groups, and the families they support

## Bridgend Youth Voice Forum

Bridgend Youth Voice is a forum for care experienced young people and care leavers aged 12 to 21 years. It acts as a sounding board to the Council and its partners for service improvement on all issues for care experienced children, young people and care leavers.

The forum is facilitated by TGP Cymru who are commissioned by us to deliver specialist independent participation support and to champion the views and rights of our children and young people. They are supported by our Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer.

The forum also collaborates with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Voices from Care Cymru, Children in Wales, Foster Wales and Welsh Government on a range of initiatives to improve the lives of children in care. The forum is valued by our young people, carers and staff.



To understand our impact over the year we asked our Youth Forum three important questions.

**What has gone well with people or things that have happened?**

- Supportive Social Workers, Personal Advisors and Foster Carers
- Feel listened to
- Supported to undertake activities that matter and are important

**What has not gone so well?**

- Feel there are different rules in place for us compared to other young people
- Feeling pressured to accept support
- Feeling unaccepted by peers

**How can the support be improved and what ideas/solutions do you have?**

- Less red tape to reduce the stigma of being care experienced
- More understanding that we do not have to stay in the local area
- Not being introduced as the "new kid" at school and ensuring the right educational support is in place
- A regional forum to provide opportunities to meet with other care experienced young people
- Advocacy champions in schools/teams to ensure all children and young people know their right to advocacy

# Adult Social Care

## Effective Partnerships

### Hospital Discharge

In partnership with the Health Board we have improved how we work together to manage discharges from hospitals more effectively. The aim of the plan was to support people to recover and regain skills to minimise poor discharges which result in return to hospital or can result in someone losing their independence at home.

We achieved this aim by:

- working within the Discharge to Recover and Assess (D2RA) framework and timelines.
- phasing implementation of Enhanced Community Care Level 4 capacity within the Community Resource Team.
- collaborating with the Regional Partnership to develop and implement an optimal model for community services.
- and, utilising the local authority escalation plan to facilitate focussed whole system activity to assist CTMUHB in improving their position at times of high pressure.

#### WHAT IS LEVEL 4 ENHANCED COMMUNITY CARE?

It is a model that helps us work with key partners to support...

- an integrated health and social care approach to avoid crisis and escalation of health and care needs where feasible.
- community services to promote faster recovery from illness, prevent unnecessary acute hospital admissions, support timely discharge and maximise independence.
- step up support to prevent hospital admission or step-down support to enable people to leave hospital early, while still receiving the treatment, care and support they need.
- people to be cared for in their own homes or usual place of residence.
- the use a combination of technology and face-to-face support, remote consultation, remote monitoring and/or remote intervention

### Housing

The council is currently working in partnership with a registered social landlord and the health board to develop a range of supported housing options close to a Wellness Centre as part of a new development.

This involves the development of a core and cluster support arrangement which will provide tenants with person centred and flexible support. The accommodation options include, supported living and targeted support in one or two bedroom flats. A business case has been produced which explains how the core and cluster arrangement will operate and how staffing resources will be used to help people live independently.

## The Mental Health Operational Group

The Mental Health Measure Operational Group (MHMOG) meets once a month to ensure all partners are meeting the statutory requirements outlined in the Mental Health Act Measure (2010) and Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. It provides an example of effective partnership working with our neighbouring Local Authority's and healthcare partners.

We aim to enhance and offer high quality services for those in need of mental health care. We are working together to make care more joined up and personal, so it is easier to get the right support when needed. The group facilitates decision-making, training opportunities, and open communication between partners.

## Supporting Autism Spectrum Disorder and Neurodiversity

We are key partners in the Regional Neurodivergence Improvement Programme. Leading on an ambitious agenda to improve access, inclusion and support for Neurodivergent adults.

The group's remit includes mental health and emotional wellbeing, leisure and community-based support, criminal justice system and substance misuse, staying safe, employment and housing.

## The Substance Misuse Service

Substance Misuse services in Bridgend are delivered in 4 tiers, which are:

- **Tier 1: Prevention & Early Identification/Intervention.** Consists of a range of drug-related interventions that can be provided by generic providers, depending on their competence and partnership arrangements with specialised substance misuse services.
- **Tier 2: Advice & Support Services.** Interventions are provided by specialist substance misuse providers and include a range of harm reduction interventions, and interventions that engage, retain, and support people in treatment. Support for families and concerned others are also considered to be tier 2 interventions.
- **Tier 3: Specialist Treatment Services.** Specialist provisions including all clinical functions, substitute prescribing programmes and community detoxification.
- **Tier 4: Services provide substance misuse Inpatient Detoxification and Residential Rehabilitation programmes.**

Tier 1 and 2 services are provided by an independent sector group who works in partnership with the Council and Health Board. Tier 3 services are a partnership between the Council and Health Board to provide social work, nursing and clinical services. All these partners are based in the same building and work together to offer a range of substance misuse services from a hub base which is accessible to the public.

# People As Equal Partners

## Social Opportunities Panel

A panel has been developed to support people to access the right preventative service for them, reduce duplication and enhance access to social opportunities.

The panel ensures decisions around access to activities is equitable, transparent and make best use of available resources.

The panel helps practitioners offer more of the right support, based on what people actually need. It cuts out duplication and makes sure everyone gets an opportunity to connect with others and feel included, no matter where they live or who is helping them.

The panel has helped us utilise services more effectively by bringing together support from social care, health and community based services. It also helps us focus on the specific needs of different areas of the borough, especially where people face more challenges like poor health, poverty, or limited access to services.

### CASE STUDY:

## Social Opportunities Panel

Adult C lives with dementia. They like to be active which can result in them becoming exhausted and increase their risk of falls. C is slow to respond to family members instructions and is becoming verbally aggressive towards their family, which is having an impact on them maintaining their carer role.

C's case was presented to the social opportunities panel to support them in achieving their well-being outcomes, which was to be active in the community. Support was provided for C to safely attend activity based groups. The Local Community Co-ordinator, Halo and Occupational Therapist worked together to find suitable groups and an Occupational Therapy Technician is supporting C to attend.

To increase social opportunities further, a request was made to panel for C to attend day services at the Integrated Dementia Service. The request was granted and C attends day services, enjoys groups activities and engaging with others.

The support provided has enabled C to achieve their outcomes by maintaining their interests, whilst ensuring their safety and well-being. C's carers are also supported to have a break from their caring role, resulting in time to recuperate and do things which are important to them. The support provided to C has brought their carers a sense of relief and reassurance, allowing them to continue in their caring role.

## Enhancing Sensory Support

Our sensory team has worked to improve sensory support, working with groups across the borough as well as visiting people at home to hear their voices. This work identified that:

- by being present at groups, the team can provide information and advice to a wider group of people, making people aware of the wide range of support available to them.
- demonstrating the use of or replacing specialist equipment at these groups or during visits reduces the need for people to contact our services.
- working with families and carers ensures they are also supported. For example, referring them to relevant organisations such as the Carers Centre.
- we can create “buddying up” opportunities for people who are newly diagnosed and lack confidence to attend groups. The team accompanies them to the group until they become confident in attending themselves.

We regularly make connections between groups and other services and organisations, for example Falls Prevention, Wales Council for the Blind, Eye Clinic Liaison Officer and the Alzheimer’s Society.

## People First Bridgend

People First Bridgend is a third sector organisation who support adults with learning disabilities and autism in Bridgend. They empower people they support to understand and exercise their rights, access services and fully participate in their communities. More information on People First Bridgend can be found [here](#).

We have strong partnership arrangements in place with People First Bridgend and to understand if we had made an impact over the year we met with representatives from People First, both staff and those that use their services, to ask 3 questions.

### What has gone well with the people that support you or the things that have happened in the last year?

- I feel supported by helpful staff and managers
- I am supported to attend People First meetings
- I now feel listened too and support needs are being met
- BAVO provide advice, support and activities within the community
- Support from the Autism Worker within the ARCs

### What has not gone well with the people that support you or the things that have happened in the last year?

- Lack of information on crisis intervention
- Allocated workers not always aware of advocacy support
- Support for the LGBTQ+ community
- Communication with allocated worker
- Flexibility of available support

### How can the support be improved?

- Breaking down barriers for timely preventative support
- Advocacy training / awareness for workers
- Advance planning for key life events such as a change in worker or move to new accommodation
- Funding to support educational / training needs
- Transport availability to participate in community based events
- Improved communication with allocated worker



# Partnership and Integration: 2025-26 Key Priorities

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## ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Partnership working with BAVO to meet people’s needs via the third sector and navigators to have “what matters” conversations to support people to connect to communities and to be clear about the different needs that can be met by navigators and local community coordinators.

Partnership working with 3rd sector Networks groups including Bridgend Inclusive network group, Bridgend young carers network group to develop new opportunities.

Work with Town & Community Councils to support universal Active4Life opportunities during school holidays.

Consultation and engagement on identified priorities and areas of focus within Library Services, Culture and Community Hub strategy for future development.

Review our out of hours Social Services arrangements.

Review the operating model of children with disabilities and transition.

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## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Implement the threshold guidance with partners so that we are all clear about our roles and responsibilities and ways accessing services.

Develop an agreed approach to multi-agency training and practice.

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## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Continue to implement our 3-year strategic plan.

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# Well-being

## Quality Standards

“People are protected and **safeguarded** from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm”

“People are supported to actively **manage their well-being** and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and **live independently** for as long as possible”

# Children and Family Services

## People are Protected and Safeguarded

We experienced a 24% rise in the number of contacts to Children and Family Services. But even with more people getting in touch, fewer children and young people are now going through formal assessments, and the number of children on the child protection register or in care has reduced.

### No Wrong Door

We are working to ensure a “No Wrong Door” approach across the service. It brings professionals together to make sure people get the support they need, without delay to prevent situations getting worse.

We respond quickly when a concern is raised, every referral is looked at within 24 hours and have worked with partners to lessen anxiety and have a shared understanding of risk thresholds. For those that require support early help services are able to provide support.

The “Signs of Safety” approach is becoming part of everyday practice. To support this, we have partner agency Signs of Safety champions and hold reflective sessions and case de-briefs to develop a common understanding on how we manage risk and implement thresholds.

### Preventing and Responding to Exploitation

We have had a local exploitation panel in operation since November 2024. During the year, we completed actions to ensure we have the right tools in place to prevent and respond to cases of child exploitation.

- Workshops to inform a local multi-agency development plan.
- The plan is now operational, setting out clear actions and a governance structure to support implementation of the strategy in Bridgend.
- We are working with Cwm Taf Regional Safeguarding Board partners to build on the work we have done in Bridgend and ensure all new processes are embedded by September 2025.
- To strengthen co-production, we have upskilled our workforce and multi-agency partners on exploitation.

We have an exploitation screening tool that is utilised across teams to identify risks associated with exploitation. The senior practitioner of our exploitation service has delivered training to teams across Children and Family Services. We have worked closely with schools, the Youth Justice Service and South Wales Police to identify areas of concern linked to exploitation and provided interventions in those areas.

# Children Safeguarding Enquiries

The reduction in safeguarding enquiries is a direct result of the greater stability of our workforce and the changes we have made in strategy meetings and decision making. We are now taking a more proportionate responses to supporting children and families in line with Wales Safeguarding Procedures.



If a partner agency does not agree with the decision in a child protection strategy meeting, we continue to promote the regional escalation of concerns process (CRISP). During the year we have not received any CRISPs as a result of decision making in strategy meetings.

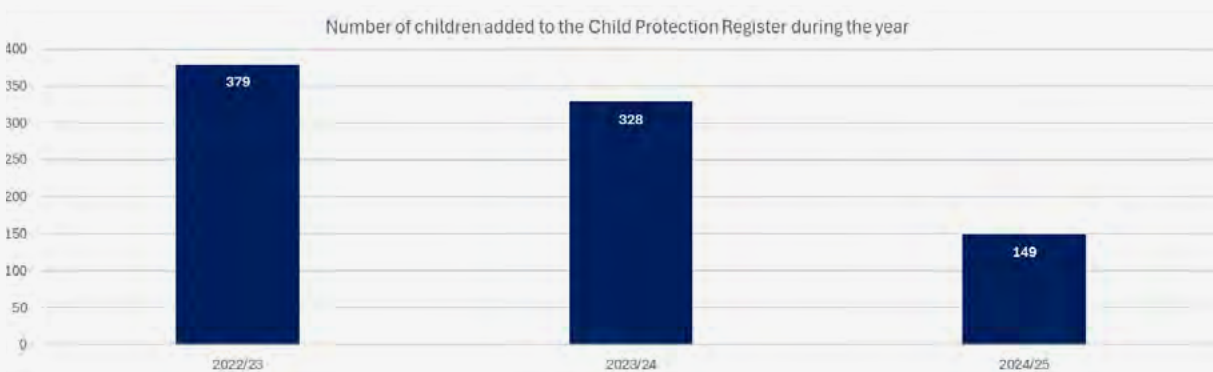
We continue to undertake work with partner agencies to support their understanding of our model of practice and have invited partners to

attend the regular reflective sessions to consider the implementation of the Safeguarding Procedures, impact on families and learning.

To further support professionals, having a shared understanding we have set up a consultation phone line. This line lets professionals talk through cases, get advice and plan next steps quickly and safely and does not replace the usual safeguarding processes which still need to be followed.

# Child Protection Registrations

The number of children added to the Child Protection Register during the year has decreased by 55% when compared to the previous year.



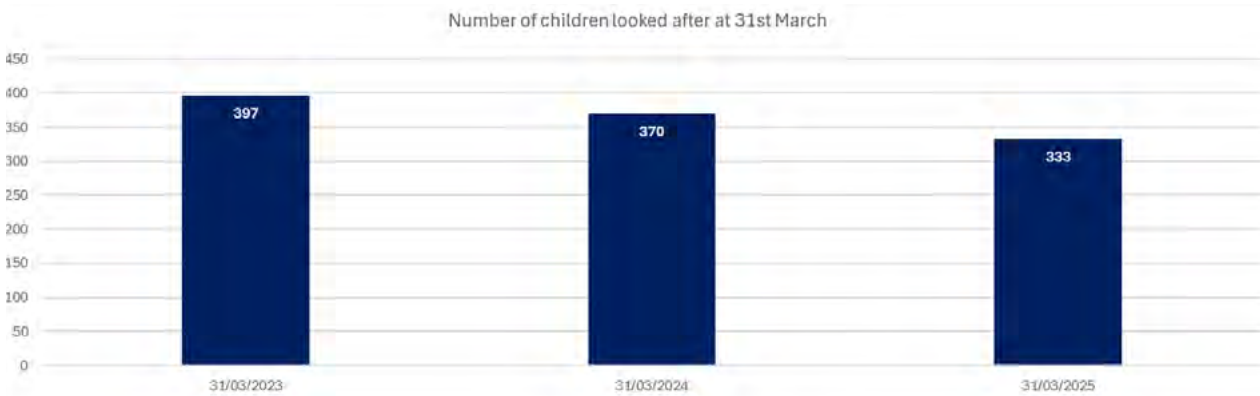
This trend reflects a continued reduction from the high number on the register in March 2023 and is a result of more proportionate decision-making regarding children's safety in addition to improved working with early help services. The number of children on the child protection register has decreased from 270 as at March 2023 to 75 as at

March 2025.

We continue to reduce the number of children registered and to provide reassurance around our decision making we have completed an audit and commissioned an independent review and share the outcomes with our partners.

# Care Experienced Children

In November 2024 we renewed our reduction strategy to decrease the number of care experienced children. The strategy focuses on prevention, family support and reunification enabling us to work with families to build to build long life connections which, where possible, enable care experienced children to safely return home.



The effectiveness of the strategy is demonstrated by the 10% decrease in care experienced children, reducing from 370 as at March 2024 to 333 as at March 2025. We will continue this work in 2025-26.

# Supporting People to Manage their Wellbeing

The Early Help and Edge of Care services completed their move into Social Services and Wellbeing in July 2024, and by early 2025, had been working with the wider statutory services for six months, giving time to fully settle in.

Hence, January to March 2025, provided a good timeframe to analyse and evaluate the impact of how the service had supported, children, young people and their families, which as noted in the analysis was extremely positive.

## ANALYSIS OF EARLY HELP: JANUARY TO MARCH 2025

KEY ACTIVITY DATA DEMONSTRATED AN INCREASED DEMAND AND ENGAGEMENT WITH EARLY HELP SERVICES:

237 referrals received, an increase of 23%

152 assessments completed, an increase of 13%

### REPORTED OUTCOMES

96% of families felt more able to make positive lifestyle and behaviour changes

94% of families noted improved family resilience

91% of individuals noted better emotional wellbeing and family relationships

88% of parents felt more confident supporting their child's development

87% of individuals noted improved personal resilience

# Adult Social Care

## People are Protected and Safeguarded

We have established a number of panels and groups to support our statutory safeguarding duties.

### Complex Case Partnership Panel

The Complex Case Partnership Panel is a multi-agency mechanism for working together to safeguard individuals in the community who present with a significant level of risk to themselves or others.

The aim of the partnership is to provide a mechanism for partner agencies to decide and agree on how to best protect individuals and the public in a co-ordinated manner.

### Self-Neglect Panel

The Self Neglect panel is a multi-agency approach to protection and risk mitigation for adults who neglect their health and wellbeing.

The panel applies to adults only, however, where children are at risk of harm because of the adult's self-neglect, a referral will be made to Children and Family Services. The protocol is triggered in cases of complex self-neglect where serious harm has or is likely to occur and existing case management processes have failed to deliver any reduction in risk.

## Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Group

This group has been established to improve prevention, awareness, knowledge and understanding around the prevention of suicide and self-harm amongst individuals and agencies who frequently encounter people at risk of suicide and self-harm.

The group consists of partners including health, social care, education, the environment, housing, employment, the police, the criminal justice system, transport and third sector.

The group has developed a clear pathway for supporting concerns and referrals in this area.

Parc Prison

A significant amount of work has been carried out with HMP/YOI Parc to ensure the ongoing safeguarding of its prisoners. This has started with building positive working relationships with the safety team and wider colleagues within the prison. A review of internal safeguarding processes was carried out to ensure alignment with All Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

There was a further review of the delivery and safeguarding training to ensure effective practice and alignment with the procedures. Both safeguarding and professional concerns training was provided to the senior operational and management staff along with wing managers to develop an awareness of their statutory responsibilities. This was met positively and now safeguarding forms part of all new recruits' induction along with ongoing training to wider prison staff in their 'lockdown Wednesdays'.

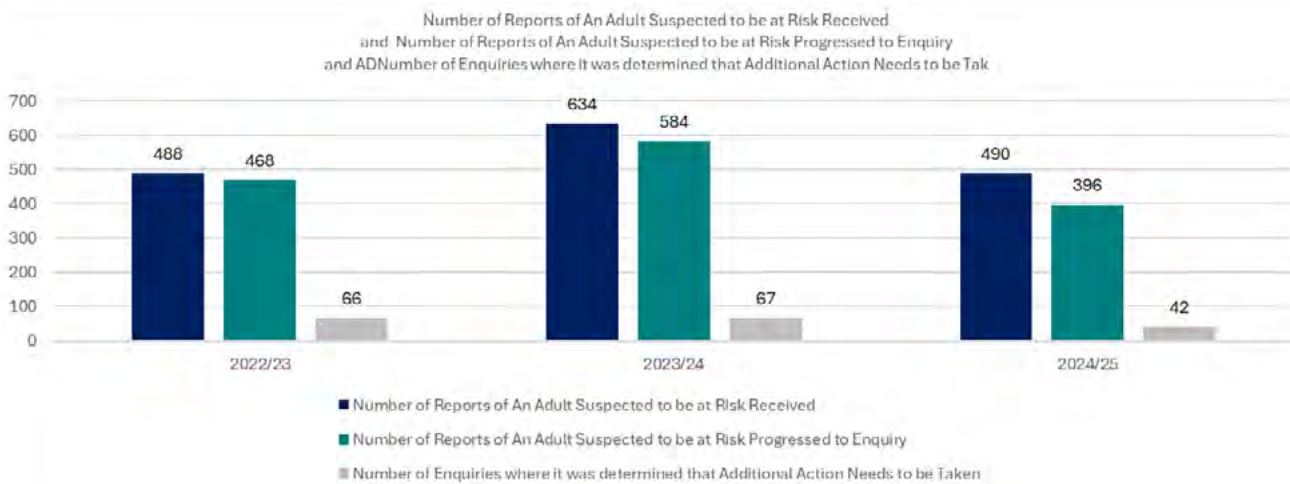
Following an increase in deaths within Parc, a range of plans have been introduced, including a forum to consider the needs of those who have made a significant attempt of suicide. This has highlighted that there are positive mechanisms in place within the prison to safeguard and support prisoners.

HM inspectorate of Prisons carried out the inspection in January which was very positive of the social work team stating, 'the local council carried out timely social care assessments and needs were appropriately identified and met.'

Over the past 12 months, there has been significant improvements both within the working relationships, and safeguarding practice within PARC and we continue to build on this.

# Adult Safeguarding Enquiries

To reduce the number of referrals where outcomes determine the person is not at risk, we implemented a new consultation process with key partners. The process encourages professionals, who have concerns about an individual, to contact the team to have a conversation before determining if an Adult at Risk (AAR) referral needs to be made. We respond to all consultations within 24 hours.



The above graph demonstrates the impact of these consultations with a 23% decrease in the number of reports made to the Adult Safeguarding Team over the last year. The number that progress to enquiry are appropriate. Those that do not proceed are due to the service being satisfied that appropriate actions are already in place or the person does not give their consent to proceed.

To strengthen arrangements further, a daily allocation meeting has been established to discuss referrals and agree next steps and a weekly monitoring system has also been introduced to escalate issues. Next steps are to complete a deep dive to establish causes of delay within the system.

## Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

In 2024-25 we received 557 referrals for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessment to Adult Social Care, a 6% increase from 524 the previous year. At the 31st March 2025, there were 21 people awaiting an assessment, which is the same as the 31st March 2024, with 22 on the waiting list.

To strengthen our processes further, in January 2025, 27 staff members (24 from Adult Social Care and 3 from Children and Family Services) received Best Interest Assessor training. In Adult Social Care these staff now take turns completing one assessment every three months which is helping us to manage our waiting list.

# Supporting People to Manage their Wellbeing

## Integrated Dementia Support Service

This service supports people with cognitive impairment and their families to help build resilience and maintain independence. The service provider has extensive knowledge and proven experience in providing a person centred support, developing strategies and techniques to support independent living, provision of information and signposting.

This service helps individuals to achieve positive outcomes through identification and recognition of their own strengths and capabilities, their personal, community and social networks. It helps them maximise these strengths to enable them to achieve their desired outcomes, thereby meeting their needs and improving or maintaining their wellbeing.

## The Safeguarding Team

The safeguarding team use the strengths based, outcome focussed model.

The lead co-ordinators identify the individual's outcomes and ensure their voice is heard. A recent referral was made for an elderly person who was a high risk victim of domestic violence, had a diagnosis of dementia and additional health needs. An urgent, multi-agency response was required to safeguard them from further harm.

As a result of discussions including the Police, domestic violence advocate, social worker and lead co-ordinator, the person was admitted to hospital as a social admission. A code word was implemented to ensure only safe people were able to visit. This short term plan ensured their safety whilst longer term plans could be made, considering their outcomes, views and wishes.



# Well-being: 2025-26 Key Priorities

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## ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Support Super Agers activities in local community settings to improve physical and mental wellbeing.

Develop a low cost offer for the 60 plus age group linked to the Welsh Government Free Swimming Initiative.

Deliver chronic condition pathways as part of the National Exercise Referral Scheme and in partnership with health services.

Provide supported access to leisure activities for targeted population groups via membership provision, utilising external support.

To monitor attendance and engagement at corporate safeguarding board meetings to ensure the Council is protecting children and vulnerable adults.

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## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Implement the Regional Exploitation Strategy, including multi-agency training and shared learning forums.

Review our standards for recording the work that we do and associated guidance.

Ensure our quality assurance activity considers the standards of our assessments and plans and helps us share good practice.

Promote children's engagement on meetings including child protection case conferences and produce records that are consistent with national procedures.

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## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Ensure that learning from Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs) and other in-depth analysis is systematically embedded through learning, training and development and follow up quality assurance and review with partners.

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# 4 OTHER INFORMATION

## Inspections and Reviews

Every year Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) undertake inspections and/ or improvement checks of health and social care services to ensure we are delivering good quality services that protect the safety and wellbeing of those that use our services.

During 2024-25 CIW completed 10 inspections across our regulated residential and direct care services.

## Children and Family Services

Three inspections were completed in respect of residential establishments in Children and Family Services. Harwood House, Golygfa'r Dolydd (Meadow's View) Assessment and Emergency Service and Sunnybank.

All inspections were positive with key findings highlighting a number of strengths including:

- strong evidence of children, young people and families being involved in the development of care plans to reflect what matters to those involved.
- children and young people being supported to make choices and have control in their day-to-day life.
- and good governance arrangements in place for management oversight.

One priority action notice was issued in respect of Sunnybank and 6 areas of improvement, 2 for Harwood House and 4 for Golygfa'r Dolydd.

The priority action notice issued to Sunnybank was in relation to planning for transitions when young people were moving. CIW have since confirmed that they are satisfied with our response and action taken.

The key areas for improvement included:

- care and support to be provided as outlined in personal plans.
- the process for completion of agency checks to be strengthened.
- premises and equipment should be suitable for the needs of all children and young people.

A full [report](#) on the scope and findings of these inspections was presented to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting on 10th January 2025. The report also notes actions taken to address the areas for improvement.

Further to the report being submitted to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting, two further inspections were completed at Bakers Way and Hillsboro. These inspections were also positive with no areas for improvement noted.

# Adult Social Care

Five inspections were completed in respect of residential establishments across Adult Social Care: Ty Cwm Ogwr Residential Home, Ty Llwynderw Extra Care establishment, Breakaway Short Stay Service and Ty Ynysawdre Extra Care establishment. Our in-house Domiciliary Care Service was also inspected.

Again, the inspections of our residential based services were positive with key findings highlighting a number of strengths including:

- people are supported and encouraged to make decisions about their care and daily routines.
- care and support is provided in an environment that enhances people's wellbeing.
- a good standard of hygiene and infection control is maintained to reduce risks of cross infection.
- and regular quality audits and checks are in place to ensure the service continues to meet people's needs.

Key strengths highlighted in the inspection of our in-house domiciliary care service:

- people have a voice, feel included, involved, and happy with the service they receive.
- people understand what care and support opportunities are available to them.
- and there is a positive culture embedded throughout the services.

It is positive to report that whilst no priority action notices were put in place for any of the Adult Social Care services inspected, 1 area of improvement was noted: personal plans to accurately reflect care and support needs.

A full [report](#) on the scope and findings of these inspections was presented to Cabinet on 8th April 2024.

All areas for improvement are monitored on a quarterly basis via our Regulatory Tracker (part of our quarterly corporate performance monitoring and feeds into our annual Corporate Self-Assessment) with actions reported to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee. Learning from inspections are embedded in key actions and priorities to support continued improvement.

# Complaints and Representations

Complaints about social services are handled according to the **Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014**, and the Welsh Government guidance, “**A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services.**” These frameworks allow people to raise concerns about the services they receive ensuring they are addressed fairly and promptly.

Over the last year the overall number of complaints received has decreased by 12%. The theme of complaints varied with the most reported areas being lack of support, staff conduct and lack of communication which accounted for 48% of all complaints received.

Our aim, where possible, is to provide a good local resolution for the people, their families and carers who use our services and 95% of complaints received were resolved either informally outside of the statutory process or at stage one (informal stage) of the statutory process.

The remaining 5% of complaints were investigated via the stage two (formal) statutory procedure. This involves an independent investigator looking into the complaint and completing a report of their findings which may lead to recommendations for ways in which we can improve.

A process is in place to regularly monitor complaints not only to identify areas of good practice but to ensure the recommendations and learning outcomes from stage two complaints are implemented. In response to stage two complaints received, here is a summary of learning outcomes implemented:

SERVICE AREA	LEARNING OUTCOME
Across Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Compliments and Complaints Resolution Team have strengthened consent procedures, staff training and guidance, and communication with complainants during periods during of staff absence.</li> <li>Communication, transparency, and person-centred approaches have been strengthened to ensure learning from complaints informs practice.</li> </ul>
Children and Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented case consultations for early management guidance and intervention.</li> <li>The Care Experienced Children’s Team have Improved recording of section 47 outcomes.</li> <li>The Children and Disability Transition Team have strengthened assessments, communication, and family engagement.</li> <li>The Fostering and Safeguarding Teams have Improved training, record-keeping, and oversight of allegations against foster carers.</li> </ul>

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**Adult  
Social Care**

- Reviewed information provided to families on the role of social workers to ensure it is clear and easy to understand.
  - The Community Learning Disabilities Team has improved timeliness of decision-making, family involvement, and case allocation.
- 

## The Citizen Voice Body

The Citizen Voice Body promotes public engagement in the planning, design and delivery of services. It helps make sure health and social care services in Wales are high quality and responsive to people's needs.

The body operates under the name "Llais" which translates as "Voice" becoming operational on 1st April 2023. Llais is an independent body providing free Advocacy support to members of the public who wish to raise a concern, which includes providing advice and information on the most appropriate course of action.

During 2024-25, we received 5 complaints from Llais advocates, 4 related to Children and Family Services and 1 to Adult Social Care.

More detailed information on complaints and representations in Bridgend can be found at "Social Services Representations and Complaints Annual Report."

# Other Sources of Information

## BRIDGEND COUNCIL

Delivering Together Our Corporate Plan 2023-28

Council Constitution

Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate

Bridgend Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Corporate Self-Assessment

Audit Wales Reports

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board

Awen Cultural Trust

Halo Leisure

BAVO Bridgend

People First Bridgend

Care Inspectorate Wales

Social Care Wales

TuVida Bridgend: Carer's Wellbeing Service

Bridgend Carers Centre

Llais Wales

## BRIDGEND COUNCIL

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

More than just words: Welsh language plan in health and social care

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014

A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services

# 5

## Glossary

**Advocacy** Advocates in social care are independent from the local authority (local council) and the NHS. They are trained to help people understand their rights, express their views and wish.

**Assessment** A meeting / discussion to help us to determine how someone is coping and what care and support they may need.

### Care Experienced Children

Care experienced is an umbrella term which can mean children / young people who are:

- Looked after at home through a Care Order
- Looked after away from home in a residential children's house, in a foster placement or in a kinship placement (Looked After or Non-Looked After)
- Previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences.

The child / young person may never have been formally looked after.

### Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW is the social care provider regulator. They will register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales.

### Care Leavers

In Wales, care leavers are individuals who have been in the care of the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care on or after their 16th birthday. The support provided to care leavers is intended to be equivalent to what a child who has not been looked after might reasonably expect from their parents.

### Care and Support Plan

A care and support plan is a document that sets out what has been discussed during a social care needs assessment and what is going

to happen as a result. It is a plan which a local authority is required to prepare and maintain under section 54 (1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

**Direct Payments** Direct payments are issued to individuals to allow them to pay for their own care. They are a way that local authorities can help to meet individual's eligible need for care and support, or a carer's need for support. They are a way for people to arrange their own care and support.

**Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)** The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) is a legal procedure in the UK designed to protect vulnerable people in care settings. It applies to adults who lack the mental capacity to give consent to their care arrangements and need to be deprived of their liberty. DoLS ensures that those who cannot consent to their care are protected when their arrangements deprive them of their liberty. It will be replaced by Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) in the future."

**Domiciliary Care / Domiciliary Support Service / Home Care** Domiciliary care, also known as "care at home", refers to a broad range of care services provided in a person's own home. It can include assistance with day-to-day living and certain health care issues for the elderly.

**Extra Care** The provision of a domiciliary care package to an individual living in supported living/ accommodation.

**Information Advice and Assistance (IAA)** Refer to contacts and referrals – consent and level of information recorded – link to proportionate assessment.

**Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** An IRO is someone who makes sure that care experienced children are looked after properly and that their care and support plans are right for them.

**Mwy Na Geiriau / More than words** More than just words is a strategy and delivery plan to aim to improve the quality of care for individuals living in a bilingual country.

**Prevention and Early Intervention** Prevention and early intervention are forms of support aimed at improving outcomes for people or preventing escalating need or risk. They are also sometimes referred to as early help or preventative services.

**Reablement / Rehabilitation / Interim care** This short-term care is sometimes called intermediate care, or aftercare. Reablement is a type of care that helps people relearn how to do daily activities, like cooking meals and washing. It is provided by local authorities with the aim of mitigating the need for long term care and support.

**Resident / Citizen** A person whose usual residence is within the local authority boundary.

**Reunification** Reunification refers to when a care experienced child or young person safely returns home to their family. Reunification only takes place once it has been determined that it is safe and the best outcome for the child or young person.

**Residential Care Home / Nursing Home** A residential care home provides accommodation and 24-hour personal care and support to the older people and others who may find it difficult to manage daily life at home. Both a residential care home and nursing home provide care and support 24 hours a day, however the main difference is that a nursing home is able to provide a higher level of care. Nursing homes have qualified nurses on-site around the clock to provide medical care as needed whereas residential homes help people with personal care and support them to engage in physical activity.

**Safeguarding \ Adult Protection \ Child Protection** Safeguarding sometimes referred to as adult protection or child protection is about protecting children and adults from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers.

**Secure Estate** A secure estate is a facility where individuals (adults or children and young people) may be housed or detained due to legal restrictions. Examples of a secure estate include prisons, young detention accommodation or an approved premises. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to assess and meet the care and support needs of individuals within a secure estate.

**Shared Lives / Adult Placement Scheme** Shared Lives Schemes, also known as adult placements, are a family-based way of supporting a vulnerable person's housing needs. This type of supportive accommodation can be the ideal

stepping stone on the way to independent living. This sharing arrangement is often referred to as 'shared lives'

**Sheltered Accommodation** Is housing for older or vulnerable people who want to live independently but with some support nearby. It usually includes a private flat, a warden or support staff, and emergency help if needed.

**Social Care Wales (SCW)** SCW is the workforce regulator. As part of this they register and set standards for the care and support workforce and develop the workforce. SCW also has an improvement remit, by which they will share good practice, set priorities for research and provide information for the public and other organisations.

**Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014** The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is a law that aims to improve the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and to transform social services in Wales.

**Supported Living / Accommodation** Supported living accommodation is a type of housing that provides personal care, support or supervision to help people live independently. The care and support are separate from the housing contract. The accommodation can be shared or single, depending on the needs and preferences of the occupants.

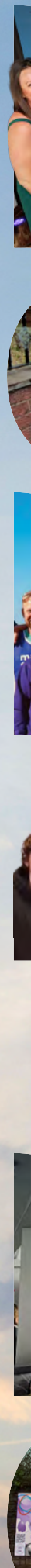
**Telecare** A service that uses technology to help people live independently and stay safe.

**Third Sector** The third sector refers to charities, community groups and not-for-profit organisations that help people and improve communities.

**Transition** The period of changeover/ move in being supported by Children and Family Services to being supported by Adult Social Care.

**Unpaid Carer** An unpaid carer is someone who provides care and support to family members, friends, or neighbours who are affected by disability, physical or mental ill-health, frailty, or substance misuse. The carer does not need to be living with the person they care for.

**Young Carer** A young carer is an unpaid carer who is up to the age of 18. They may be providing care and support to parents, siblings or other family members.





# Agenda Item 5

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11 SEPTEMBER 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>SARAH TRIPP, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>The Social Services Representations and Complaints Annual Report for 2024/25 provides a review of the effectiveness of the social services complaint’s procedure and a summary of statistical information relating to the complaints and representations dealt with during the reporting period.</b></p> <p><b>The report includes -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>• numbers of complaints and representations received and resolved at each stage;</b></li> <li><b>• adherence to timescales;</b></li> <li><b>• the nature of the complaints and representations, and;</b></li> <li><b>• a summary of the lessons learned and actions taken by the Authority in relation to the complaints and representations received.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>The report also provides a cross-section of feedback across the Directorate in the form of comments and compliments.</b></p>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the draft 2024/25 Annual Report on Social Services Representations and Complaints for consideration of its information, analysis and future objectives before it is presented to Cabinet for approval on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025. The Annual Report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## 2. Background

2.1 Members will be aware that there is a requirement for local authorities to have in place procedures for considering any representations or complaints made in relation to the discharge of their Social Services functions. This Annual Report relates to Social Services representations and complaints received that have been handled in accordance with the Welsh Government Complaint Guidelines “*A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services*” which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014. The guidance supports the implementation of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Regulations outline a two-stage process in line with the Health Services Complaints Procedure.

2.2 The key elements of the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure are to:

- respond to Stage 1 complaints within 15 working days of the date of resolution (10 working days permitted to meet/discuss with the complainant to achieve a resolution).
- complete Stage 2 independent complaint investigations within 25 working days.
- work collaboratively with colleagues within the Directorate and in other Directorates of the Authority, the NHS and liaise with external bodies such as the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales to provide a ‘seamless’ complaints service.
- monitor performance of complaints handling, learning from complaints and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them.

Where complainants have exhausted the complaints procedure, the complainant has the right to refer their concern for consideration by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

2.3 From the Annual Report, members will note that a strong emphasis is placed not just upon complaints, but also on the comments and compliments providing a balanced view. Services across the Directorate are keen to learn from the information gathered and use this to inform service improvements as well as future service developments.

2.4 The Annual Report also contains management information relating to complaints addressed in accordance with the Authority’s Corporate Complaints Procedure, together with information relating to the majority of complaints being addressed and resolved informally (prior to reaching Stage 1 of the complaints procedure). This important and significant work ensures concerns are resolved efficiently, with an agreed resolution whilst preventing complainants from being subjected to the formal complaints procedure unnecessarily.

- 2.5 Statistical information relating to the processing of Member Referrals is provided in the Annual Report. The Representations and Complaints Procedure does not preclude the right of an individual to approach their local Councillor, Member of the Senedd or Member of Parliament who all undertake an important role in handling concerns and queries that individual constituents may have. Member Referrals can range from comments and queries to complaints.
- 2.6 The Annual Report also includes information arising from a cross-section of feedback generated from user/carer engagement exercises undertaken by a range of service areas.

### 3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Annual Report contains statistical information in relation to the representations and complaints received during 2024/25 for both Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services.
- 3.2 The number of representations (complaints, comments and compliments) received during the reporting period is broken down as follows:

27	Statutory Complaints
143	Concerns resolved outside of the complaints procedure
374	Compliments / Comments

This is a decrease in the overall number of complaints received over the last year: 170 in 2024/25 compared to 182 in 2023/24 and 191 in 2022/23. The report shows an increase in the number of compliments received compared to the previous reporting periods; 374 compliments received in 2024/25 compared to 362 received in 2023/24 and 257 received in 2022/23. Complaints staff continue to encourage all staff across the Directorate to record and log all compliments received.

- 3.3 An analysis of performance demonstrates that the Directorate continues to achieve an early resolution for the vast majority of complainants. The number of complaints resolved by this approach in 2024/25 was 143 (84%), in comparison to previous years, which was 141 (77%) in 2023/24 and 142 in 2022/23 (74%), demonstrating an improvement in performance. This evidences the continued focus on swift and effective complaints handling via a local, citizen centred, approach.
- 3.4 During 2024/25, 11 complaints were received by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; 9 were regarding Children and Family Services, while 2 pertained to Adult Social Care. Notably, none of these cases proceeded to investigation. This represents a decrease from 16 complaints in 2023/24, but is fairly consistent with the 10 complaints received in 2022/23.
- 3.5 During 2024/25, 3 complaints were addressed by the Corporate Complaints procedure. These complaints pertained to Children and Family Services and involved

a subject access request, issues with residential financial charging, and a data breach.

- 3.6 During 2024/25, a total of 27 complaints were addressed in accordance with the Statutory Social Services Complaints Procedure; equating to 16% of all complaints received. 18 were resolved at Stage 1, and 9 progressed through to Stage 2. Stage 2 is the formal investigation stage requiring the appointment of an Independent Investigator. Information provided within the report suggests that there is a higher level of complexity in cases that proceed through the formal Stage 2 process.
- 3.7 The report highlights how the Directorate applies lessons learned from complaints within its service areas. During this reporting period, a notable example includes collaborating with senior leaders and management to address recurring issues and trends. This involves following up on the completion of corrective actions and monitoring the implementation of impartial recommendations from Stage 2 Independent Investigating Officers. The complaints department also work alongside the Quality Assurance Officer to integrate insights from complaints into broader service improvement plans.
- 3.8 The report also highlights a wide range of feedback from people who use social care services which is used to inform service development. The Annual Report details a cross section of the feedback received for a range of services across the Directorate.
- 3.9 The number of Member Referrals received for both Adult and Children and Family Services during the reporting period was 131; 101 of which were in relation to Adult Social Care and 30 in relation to Children and Family Services. This is a decrease of 3% from 135 members referrals received in 2023/24.
- 3.10 Independent advocacy support services across Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services continues to be a priority, and the annual report provides details of advocacy activity across both service areas, together with a summary of comments and outcomes achieved.
- 3.11 The majority of the work carried out within the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure is undertaken in consultation with Legal services, and there is a strong working relationship between the social services complaints staff and the Council's legal department.

#### **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 report assists in the achievement of the following corporate 5 ways of working under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

Involvement	The report provides a comprehensive overview of the feedback and concerns expressed by people who use social services during the reporting period 2024/25. It offers valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of individuals accessing social services.
Long term	There will be a positive long-term impact from this report by transparently addressing representations and complaints. The report lays a foundation for continuous improvement in service delivery. It also promotes accountability and highlights areas for refinement, fostering a culture of long-term responsiveness and accountability.
Prevention	The report supports the council’s objective to help people and communities to be healthier and more resilient. Our community engagement encourages self-sufficiency and collaborative solutions, reducing the need for extensive reliance on resources.
Integration	This report is integrated across the Directorate in both Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services as set out above and is required under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.
Collaboration	The guidance that underpins this report has an emphasis on achieving service user satisfaction. Staff across the Directorate have worked collaboratively with the people of the county borough to ‘put things right’ and secure positive outcomes for individuals and families wherever practicably possible.

**6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

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

**7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 All staff have a duty under the Council’s Safeguarding Policy to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect, to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services. The complaints department support safeguarding activity by ensuring that any complaints containing safeguarding concerns are referred to the relevant safeguarding teams in a timely manner.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the draft Annual Report on Social Services Representations and Complaints for 2024/25 and provide feedback in preparation for the full report being presented to Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 for approval.

## **Background documents**

None

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



## SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS



## ANNUAL REPORT 2024 / 2025

***September 2025***

**SOCIAL SERVICES  
REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS 2024/25**

**CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
2. Summary of the Complaints Procedure
3. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
4. Member Referrals
5. Complaints and representations received from the Citizen Voice Body “Llais”
6. Engagement and Feedback
7. Statistical Information 2024/2025
8. How complaints were Resolved and Lessons Learned
9. Achievements in 2024/2025
10. Objectives for 2025/2026
11. Equalities



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and relates to representations and complaints received by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate regarding services and support provided by Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services.

Local Authority Social Services are required to maintain a procedure for considering complaints and representations (comments and compliments). Any member of the public, including a child who has received or was entitled to receive a service from Social Services may make a complaint. The purpose of this report is to provide a review and statistical analysis of the complaints, comments and compliments received by Social Services during the reporting period.

This is the tenth Annual Report relating to representations and complaints received by the Directorate which have been handled in accordance with the Welsh Government Complaint Guidelines “*A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services*” which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014. The guidance supports the implementation of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Regulations introduced a two-stage process which replaced the previous three stages and also brings the process for Social Services into line with the NHS Complaints Procedure.

## **2. SUMMARY OF THE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**“A guide to handling complaints and representations by Local Authority Social Services” (Welsh Government).**

**Stage 1 – Local Resolution:** An emphasis is placed upon swift resolution of the majority of complaints. An offer to discuss the complaint with the complainant must be made to attempt to resolve matters. This discussion must take place within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement of the complaint. Where this approach leads to mutually acceptable resolution, the Local Authority must write to the complainant with details of the terms of the resolution within 5 working days of the date on which the complaint or representation was resolved.

**Stage 2 – Formal Investigation:** Appointment of an Independent Investigator is made and for complaints relating to Children and Family Services an Independent Person must also be appointed to oversee the investigation process. Collaborative arrangements have been established (on a reciprocal basis) with neighbouring Local Authorities to share details of Independent Investigating Officers and Independent Persons able to undertake investigations.

The investigation must be completed, and a full written response issued to the complainant within 25 working days. Where this is not possible, the Authority must write to the complainant to explain the reason for the delay and ensure the response is issued as soon as possible and no later than 6 months from the date of receipt of the complaint.

### 3. THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Where complainants have exhausted the complaints procedure, they have the right to refer their concern for consideration by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

The PSOW provides an external independent service for the purpose of considering complaints made by members of the public in relation to all Local Authority services, including Social Services. The PSOW also has jurisdiction to examine and determine complaints of injustice as a result of maladministration on the part of the Local Authority.

The Ombudsman will normally require complainants to have sought redress, in the first instance, via the Local Authority's complaints procedure prior to accepting and investigating a complaint of maladministration on the part of the Local Authority.

During 2024/2025, 11 complaints were received by the PSOW's Office, 9 of which related to Children and Family Services, 2 in respect of Adult Social Care. None were progressed to investigation.

### 4. MEMBER REFERRALS

The Representations and Complaints Procedure does not preclude the right of an individual to approach their Local Councillor, Assembly Member or Member of Parliament. They undertake an important role in handling concerns and queries that individual constituents may have. Collectively, these are called Member Referrals and can range from comments and queries to complaints.

If an Elected Member considers it to be inappropriate to deal with a concern, the matter can be referred for consideration under the Complaints Procedure. With effect from 2017, only those referrals received from Elected Members have been recorded by Democratic Services. Cabinet Members may liaise with Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to complete referrals but this data is no longer recorded.

During 2024/2025, Member referrals were received as follows:-

**Table 1**

<b>2024/2025</b>	<b>Number of Referrals</b>
Adults and Prevention & Wellbeing	101
Children and Family Services	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>

**5. COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED FROM THE CITIZEN VOICE BODY “LLAIS”**

The Citizen Voice Body (CVB) promotes public engagement in the planning, designing and delivery of services and plays a key role in ensuring health and social care services in Wales are of a high quality and are responsive to the needs of citizens. The CVB operates under the name “Llais” and became operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. Llais is an independent body which provides a free Advocacy service to support members of the public who may wish to raise a concern. Llais also provide advice and information on the most appropriate course of action. During the reporting period, **6** complaints were received from Llais advocates; **5** of which related to Children and Family Services and **1** in respect of Adult Social Care.

**6. ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK**

In addition to receiving comments and compliments from service users and their relatives/carers, the Directorate also issues a range of feedback questionnaires from across service areas. A cross-section of the feedback during 2024/2025 is set out below:

**Adult Social Care**

The **Telecare** survey is forwarded to all people who have accessed a Local Authority Domiciliary Care Service and have an active Care and Support Plan.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, **785** surveys were distributed, of which, **165** responses were received. This is a **21%** response rate, which is a decrease from the response rate of 34% in the previous year.

General comments provided include:

I have mobility issues and a great fear of falling and could be on the floor for hours. Telecare is like a security blanket.
Excellent services and everyone helpful and considerate.
A from your organisation recently visited my mum to set up the emergency response system. Everything went perfectly but I just wanted to say what a great job A did in explaining the system and how it all works. We all found him very concise, very knowledgeable and very helpful! A is certainly a credit to your team and I would be grateful if you could pass on both mine and my mother’s thanks.
Happy with the peace of mind that you are on call.
The chap who was here was very polite and patient. Spent a long-time explaining things to us - he was so thorough. He was very pleasant too. He tidied up after installing the key safe.
We are grateful. We only set the fall watch off by mistake, but the response time was impressive. Thank you.

The **Early Intervention and Prevention Hub** provides all contact for adult health and social services. Both the public and professionals can access the hub, which provides:

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- information, advice and assistance including direction to third sector and community services when they are the best places to address well-being needs;
- and multi-disciplinary triage including mental health services and urgent community response for people who need assessment or immediate service.

Comments include:

I really appreciate all the support from you for us as a family.
You have been so lovely and you have been so nice, you have been very understanding, I was dreading making this call but you have listened to me.
Honestly B this is life changing I can't thank you enough for everything you have done.
C is very helpful, she has been excellent, helpful and supportive. She is professional and is approachable. Her communication is always clear, and she has tried her best to get the best package of care for us and I really appreciate it. She's punctual and if she promises to do something, she always follows it up and keeps me in the loop and notifies me of things.
I can't thank you enough for being so kind and listening to me and helping me.

The **Commissioning for Complex Needs** team play a crucial role in effectively engaging with all stakeholders and individuals to ensure support is provided in line with each person's outcomes and aspirations. The team offer proportionate, evidence based, strengths based, outcome focused assessments and reviews, which enable people to achieve their aspirations whilst maximising resources.

Comments provided include:

Thank you for keeping me updated, we have been to Tenby for a couple of days and have just got home, it will be sad seeing you go, you have been a great help to us all and we will miss you, thank you for everything you have done to help us.
Just a little email to let you know about a compliment given today around good practice and professional standards in relation to conduct for a NHS Continuing Healthcare Assessment, carried out in Brocastle. Extremely stressful time for family, good outcome, son had an awful experience with his father going through the same process beforehand but felt for his mother it was conducted very professionally.
Thanks for all your help and support for D and myself at both meetings, which was really important for D's future happiness and independence.
Thank you for your help on this also. Your support along with E has been invaluable.

**Bryn Y Cae** is a purpose built residential home, which provides residential and respite care for older persons with assessed care and support needs. The service provides short term reablement placements for up to 6 weeks to prevent hospital admission or step down; this is an integrated service provided by the local authority and the health board. It has 37 bedrooms; 9 of which are within the dementia unit of the home, 22 are in the frail elderly units and 6 are on the re-enablement unit. The dementia unit has nine bedrooms, all of which have en-suite facilities. They come furnished or residents can choose to bring in their

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own furniture. Staff at Bryn Y Cae encourage families to assist their relative to personalise their room as much as possible. There is an assisted bathroom and separate shower room, a reminiscence room, large lounge/activity room and one quiet lounge. There is also a dining room with access to a secure garden area. Staff at Bryn Y Cae are committed to supporting residents to lead a fulfilled life as possible, in an environment which:

- Places value on individual beliefs, choices and aspirations.
- Promotes maximised independence and community integration.
- Provides a safe, nurturing and homely environment,

Comments provided include:

To everyone on the butterfly unit. Thank you all so much for your care in looking after everyone on your unit.

F told me how absolutely wonderful all the staff have been since G has been there. She said they were all really caring but not just to G but to the whole family and they really appreciated it.

Thank you for everything you do for Mum and making it such a joy for her at this time of her life. We can't thank you enough.

Thank you for the incredible job you do looking after our loved ones. You all have compassion, patience, and an exceptional level of dedication. We cannot express how grateful we are knowing your looking after all residents (especially H). Hoping you all have a wonderful Christmas. Best Wishes.

The home is wonderful; I can't praise you and your team enough.

### **Children and Family Services**

The **West Locality Safeguarding Hub** work with children from pre-birth to 18 years of age. The team manage care and support, child protection, Public Law Outline and court cases. The team work closely with children and families and partner agencies to facilitate plans in an attempt to facilitate positive change for families. The team analyse and manage risk to ensure children remain at home where it is safe for them to do so.

Comments include:

Just a big thank you for getting who I am and who I could be and for being patient. I'm really grateful and thankful for all your help. All I can say is I got a house, my son, my life back and I just need my grandchildren back and I be completely happy. But again thank you I, I don't know how you do a job like you do.'

As you know J has been a huge part of our lives since February and she has been outstanding. J has everything a family could ever need in a social worker, she's professional but also very down to earth, non-judgemental, supportive and goes above and beyond in all aspects of her work. As you know we as a family have been involved with children's services on and off for years. We've had some awful social workers, some ok but only just, others that whilst have been nice they've been for their mandatory visit and that's it for another 2 or 6 weeks. J however, checks in several times a day even when she probably isn't required to, she has a passion for her job that you rarely see and above all she's very compassionate and empathic and shows that social workers are actual human beings too rather than "robots" who come in, find fault and leave again. My confidence in my parenting regularly takes a tumble but she's always there reassuring me and making me feel better about myself. Again, as you are aware I find it very difficult to converse with people causing a massive reluctance in her engaging. However, J has made a lot of headway with K and K often seeks out J when she's distraught and in need of someone to speak to. K has made it clear that when J leaves, she will not work with anyone else and unfortunately, I believe this to be true. I fear that this will set K back even further and will be detrimental to her mental health and her trust issues with people, she needs consistency and right now other than myself, J is the only other person giving her that. My other children all love J too and love seeing her and speaking with her. I have voiced my concerns to the multi-agency disciplinary team and the majority, if not all are extremely concerned as to what K will do and how she will cope with no longer having J. K is nowhere near ready to come away from her. Finally, I'd like to finish by again saying how amazing J is, she is a great asset to your team and I know that she will go extremely far in life. She's got everything and more required in a social worker. I'm begging and pleading that you keep her on the team for not only K's sake but also the massive difference she will make to the lives of many families in the future, and you will have the pleasure of saying - she's one of my team and I knew from the off she would make a massive difference 😊.

I just wanted to say how impressed I have been by the [local authorities] support for L and her parents and in particular M's work on this case. [The Judge] was very complimentary about his work on this case, and I just wanted you to be aware. There is so much criticism out there I just wanted you to know that others do recognise and appreciate all the hard work that you do.

Would just like to say you've made a good impression on N, she doesn't talk fondly of many adults but she always points out that you actually talk about her, her general life & interests etc & seem to listen to what she says. Thank you

Bridgend County Borough Council's **Child Disability and Transition** team supports disabled children and young people, including those in care, as they transition into adulthood. This team provides support, including financial assistance for meeting care needs, and aims to facilitate smooth transitions from childhood to adulthood.

Comments include:

I just wanted to say thank you for everything you did for me and don't say it's your job because you went above your job to help me so thank you.

Hope you have the best Christmas because that is what you make mine. You truly are the best and extremely awesome.

We hope you and your family have a fantastic festive period. Thank you for all your amazing work. I know he and we really appreciate it.

You were very supportive of staff and O was always on the end of the phone if we needed anything. You also had a very good relationship with P which I felt kept him in a good place and ultimately had a very good outcome.

The **Kinship Care & Permanence** team supports kinship carers, birth parents, and children in special guardianship orders. They provide financial support, home visits, advice, support groups, fostering training, and placement support. The team also assists with communication with other organisations and birth parents.

Comments include:

Thank you for today. Please pass on to Q also. We felt listened to, heard and understood, it's been a long time since we have felt appreciated. Have a wonderful Xmas x

I visited a carer yesterday, R, and she said that the support you are providing to the young person in her care is brilliant, and she couldn't speak highly enough of you. I just wanted to email to say thank you for the work that you do, it is appreciated and makes such a difference to our carers and young people.

I just wanted to share how positive the support from fostering has been over recent weeks. As you know there are challenges in both teams but it certainly feels like a joint approach to address matters rather than it being a [social work team] issue, so thanks S for your hard work and support. I also want to say how impressed I am of T. She is so helpful, upfront and child focused. She has been a great support on several cases recently.

I would like to say that since U has worked with V he is a changed child, he has really helped him. We are really sorry to see him leave us. He has been a very good asset to myself and W. Thank you very much.

**Adult Social Care - Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)****Providers**

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) commissions a 'Hub & Spoke' service model for advocacy which includes:

- Bridgend Voice & Choice (BVC) Advocacy Contact Hub: PromoCymru;
- Specialist Learning Disability Provider (statutory and non-statutory): People First Bridgend, and;
- Specialist Communications/Accessible Support Provider: Mental Health Matters Wales

**Performance Data**

During the 2024/25 reporting period, the BVC Advocacy Hub received an average of 35 contacts per quarter, which was down from an average of 50 per quarter the previous year. Whilst the volume of connected contacts has varied, peaking in 2021 and 2022, there has been a marked and consistent increase in the proportion of contacts resulting in formal case records. This suggests that although overall contact demand has not maintained the numbers seen between 2021 and 2022; the helpline is now dealing with a greater proportion of contacts requiring intensive advocacy intervention.

Professionals remained the primary source of helpline enquiries, emphasising their crucial role in facilitating advocacy access, but potentially demonstrating that wider knowledge of the role and rights to advocacy is needed.

Referrals and contacts to the BVC Hub are triaged and referred to the most appropriate support service. During the reporting period, 47% of BVC helpline cases were referred for Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA), ensuring those with statutory advocacy needs received specialist support. 33% of cases involved signposting or transfer to other specific specialist services. 80% of all cases received relevant information and/or advice, indicating that the vast majority of service users benefited from tailored guidance, either as a standalone intervention or alongside further support. Across 2024/25, BVC signposted cases to a total of 48 individual organisations.

Overall, whilst connected contacts have declined in volume; the significant rise in conversion rate demonstrates fewer, but more complex, cases required intensive support.

Most BVC helpline enquiries relating to the adult social care process centred around requests for information, advice, and assistance usually indicating service users wanting to enter the care and support process. Care and carer assessments, as well as care and support planning, also saw increased activity mid-year, mirroring the heightened activity on the helpline from professionals seeking advocacy support in navigating and accessing services during this period. Safeguarding and care reviews remained steady across the year, whilst complaints and child protection issues, though less frequent, were present throughout.



**Children and Family Services – Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)**

Provider

Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) is an established and long-standing advocacy provider in the Bridgend area, under a regional contract for Cwm Taf Morgannwg led by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

Active Offers & Issue-based Advocacy (IBA)

During the year, 133 children and young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 172 issues. This represents a decrease of 12 young people compared to 145 who accessed the service in the previous year. Of the 133, 58 were accessing the service for the first time, down from 76 first-time users in the previous year.

There was also a small decrease in Active Offers (AO), with 66 received this year, compared to 71 last year. A total of 132 children and young people were eligible for the AO during the year, a 49% reduction from 262 the previous year. Of those eligible, 66 were referred for AO, meaning that 50% of eligible individuals received a referral, compared to just 27% the previous year. While this increase is encouraging, we recognise that further improvement is needed.

To improve this, TGP have delivered presentations to social work teams to increase the understanding of the local authorities’ responsibilities in promoting the AO. Additionally, TGP distributed literature via email outlining referral pathways, the AO and the advocacy process. These efforts have had a positive impact, as several IBA referrals were received as a direct result.

The decrease in the number of children and young people in the child protection arena accessing advocacy services may, in part, be attributed to the decline in young people becoming eligible for the AO.

**7. STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2024/2025**

**Number of Representations Received and Timescales**

**Table 2**

<b>Total Number of Complaints and Representations Received Statutory Complaints Procedure – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b>		
<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Adult Social Care</b>	<b>Children and Family Services</b>
Informal (resolved outside of the formal complaints procedure)	41	102
Stage 1	7	11
Stage 2	3	6
<b>Total Complaints</b>	<b><u>170</u></b>	
<b>Compliments</b>	<b>Adult Social Care</b>	<b>Children and Family Services</b>
	252	122
<b>Total Compliments</b>	<b><u>374</u></b>	

A total of 182 complaints were received in the previous period 2023/24. The table above shows a **decrease in complaints** received during this reporting period, – **6.5%** compared to the previous year.

A total of 362 compliments were received in the previous period 2023/24. The table above shows an **increase in compliments** received during this reporting period, + **3%** compared to the previous year.

### Timescales

**98%** of all complaints were acknowledged by the complaints department within 2 working days during this reporting period.

At Stage 1, the complainant should be contacted within 10 working days of the acknowledgment date by the individual investigating the complaint. This person is usually the relevant manager responsible for the service area related to the complaint. After resolving the complaint, a written response should be provided on behalf of the Local Authority within 5 working days of the discussion or meeting.

During the reporting period, 16.6% of complaints led to a meeting or telephone call held within 10 working days. It's pertinent to acknowledge that this figure reflects mutual availability; as there are times when managers may be busy or on leave, or the dates offered may not be suitable for the complainant, leading to the meeting occurring later than 10 working days.

Overall, **67%** of Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the timescales outlined in the complaints policy. This is the percentage of complaints that received a written response within 5 working days following the telephone discussion or meeting. If no meeting or call took place, compliance is calculated based on those who received a written response within 15 working days from the start date of the complaint. This is an increase from the 47% completed within timescale in the previous year.

At Stage 2, the guidelines specify that an investigation must be completed, and a full written response issued to the complainant within 25 working days of the start date. Unfortunately, no Stage 2 complaint investigations were completed, and reports issued within this timeframe. This is consistent with the previous year. The complexity and seriousness of the complaints that reach this stage have resulted in investigations exceeding the 25-working day limit. The severity and intricacy of the issues investigated during the reporting period necessitated thorough and detailed investigations, requiring more time to ensure all aspects are carefully considered.

Several independent investigations during the reporting period involved interviews with former staff members who have since left the local authority. In these cases, the complaints department must co-ordinate with Human Resources (HR) to obtain contact details and encourage the voluntary participation of former staff members, which can take additional time. As former staff no longer have access to social work systems, they must rely on their recollections of events, making it more challenging to obtain the accurate and detailed accounts needed for the investigation.

Another factor contributing to delays in completing complaint investigations is the complexity of the complaints themselves. A significant proportion of complaints are highly detailed and involved multiple complex issues. During the reporting period, **41%** of complaints covered multiple issues, which is relatively consistent with the 46% reported the previous year. While we strive to meet the timescales outlined in our complaints policy, the complexity of these complaints necessitates a thorough approach to ensure meaningful and positive outcomes for complainants. Additional time is required to ensure all aspects of each complaint are fully considered and addressed.

Additionally, **14%** of complaints involved multiple teams within the local authority, an increase from 9.5% the previous year. This necessitates co-ordination among various service managers, further prolonging enquiries and the investigation process.

When assessing compliance with timescales, it is essential to consider the substantial increase in complaint volumes during the 2022/23 reporting period. That year saw a 158% rise in complaints compared to the previous year. Although there was a slight decrease of 5% in 2023/24, followed by another decrease of 6.5% in 2024/25, the overall number of complaints remains significantly higher than when Welsh Government last reviewed the application of these timescales in 2014.

Despite these ongoing challenges, there has been an improvement in the timeliness of responses to Stage 1 complaints, reflecting the directorate's ongoing efforts to streamline processes, enhance coordination, and provide more timely responses to those raising concerns. While progress at Stage 1 is encouraging, it is clear that further work is needed to ensure compliance with timescales. To support this effort, we are reviewing internal workflows with the goal of refining and accelerating our processes, especially in light of the complexity of complaints received.

To support adherence to timescales at Stage 2, we are actively working to expand the pool of available independent investigators. This includes sharing information about both new and experienced investigators with neighbouring local authorities, as well as exchanging insights into the quality of investigatory work conducted (while maintaining complainant confidentiality). Additionally, we are exploring opportunities to attract qualified candidates to these roles. This would help alleviate pressure on existing resources, support adherence to timescales, and ensure the continued delivery of high-quality investigations.

### **Overall Analysis**

#### *Early Resolution of Complaints*

In line with the Welsh Government Guidance "A guide to handling complaints and representations by Local Authority social services" Bridgend County Borough Council, wherever possible, focuses on early resolution of complaints, with **84%** of complaints resolved informally during this reporting period (pre the complaints procedure). This is an increase from the 77% of complaints resolved informally in 2023/24. The high percentage continues to reflect the Directorate's commitment to achieving early resolution for complainants.

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Some of the feedback and comments received in relation to staff working within the Social Services Complaints Department are as follows:

Well done W, [the] recognition of the professional way you lead complaints for us is very well deserved.

X, you've been exemplary.

Further to today's quarterly performance meeting, can I express my gratitude to Y for supporting me in my role to make sense of emerging themes across the Directorate and subsequent triangulation with Compliments and Complaints data. Y is consistently responsive to information requests and more recently set up regular meetings between us to ensure that we evaluate the findings we critically reflect on to improve quality across the Directorate and promote excellence wherever possible.

Once again, I appreciate your help.

Thank you for responding so quickly.

### *Complaint Outcomes (Statutory)*

In-line with Welsh Government guidance on "A guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social services" complaints resolved at the local resolution stage are only closed by mutual consent, with all parties confirming that a resolution has been agreed. The three most common themes during this reporting period were:

- Lack of support (**18%**)
- Staff conduct (**16%**)
- Lack of communication (**14%**)

Further information on themes can be found on Page 17 and 18 of this report.

Stage 2 complaints are investigated by an Independent Investigating Officer (IIO) independent from the Council. Complaints relating to Children and Family Services must also be overseen by an Independent Person (IP).

The outcome of Stage 2 complaints resolved within the reporting year are as follows:

Table 3.

<b>Complaint Outcomes (St. 2 – Statutory Complaints Procedure)</b>			
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Adult Social Care</b>	<b>Children and Family Services</b>	<b>Total</b>
Not Upheld	1	3	4
Partially Upheld	1	3	4
Upheld	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

The following complaints were upheld following independent investigation:

### **Children and Family Services**

#### **Lack of Care and Support Package.**

The Independent Investigating Officer (IIO) concluded that there was no Care and Support package in place despite the allocation of Direct Payments. The Child Disability and Transition team did not implement appropriate support.

#### **No Carer's Assessment for Parents.**

The investigation established that parents received no support as carers. The Child Disability and Transition team did not act on a referral for a Carer's Assessment.

#### **Funding Change from a Commissioned Service to Direct Payments.**

The IIO found no clear rationale in records or in the information elicited at interview for the proposed change.

#### **Proposed Transition Despite Stable Placement.**

The IIO concluded that the current placement at Ty Teulu was successful, yet Bridgend Resource Centre was proposed to complainants in care planning. The IIO concluded that this was inconsistent with the young person's needs.

#### **Respite Not Offered.**

The investigation identified there was no updated discussion of respite since 2021, and that respite needs were not considered in recent care and support planning.

#### **Inadequate Support Following Allegation Against Foster Carer.**

The IIO found gaps in process, communication, and record-keeping. The investigation established that support was insufficient and that the safeguarding process was mishandled.

#### **Failure to Support Child During Investigation.**

The IIO found evidence of delayed contact and a lack of support. The investigation concluded that the child was not properly supported and the safety plan was not reviewed.

**Disputed Strategy Meeting Communication.**

The IIO established during staff interviews that there were conflicting statements made about police contact. The complaint was upheld due to poor communication and follow-up.

**Poor Safety Planning.**

The IIO found no evidence of adequate safeguarding documentation and communication was lacking.

**Lack of Transparency in Safeguarding Process.**

The IIO concluded that the complainant was not kept informed of the process. There were communication failures; the IIO concluded that the complainant should have been appropriately informed of the process and there were missed opportunities for support.

**Loss of Foster Carer's Records.**

The IIO found inconsistencies around record submission and management. The investigation established that the foster carer records were mishandled and that the record keeping practices were inconsistent with policy.

**Adult Social Care****Lack of Communication About Activities.**

The IIO found that the complainant did not receive email updates on son's activities at Bridgend Resource Centre.

**Decision on Direct Payment Top-up Delay.**

The IIO established that following the notice given from the previous provider, the family were not offered timely alternatives. The IIO concluded that the communication delay was unacceptable; the family were left with no options and were required to fund the direct payment top-up for the new provider.

**Assessment Process Delays.**

The IIO established that there was a delay in assigning a knowledgeable social worker. The delays were due to staffing issues.

**Bridgend Resource Centre (BRC) lacking in Capacity and Suitability.**

The IIO established that, following the notice given from the previous provider, the new provider (BRC) was not appropriate for the complainant's son's needs and there was no availability for the required five days a week.

**Unresolved Funding Issues and Reduced Direct Payment hours.**

The investigation established that, following closure of the previous provider, there was uncertainty regarding the new placements funding. This resulted in a lack of stability or clarity for the complainant's son's care.

**Improper Transition Planning.**

The IIO established that a move to Bridgend Resource Centre was suggested without proper assessment or planning, causing the complainant and family uncertainty.

**Misinformation received During Assessment Process.**

The IIO found that the agency social worker misinformed the family and failed to appropriately coordinate the case. The IIO found that there was an inadequate understanding of policies and poor communication.

**Social Services Complaints****Delay in Stage 1 Complaint Handling.**

The IIO found a delay in requesting daughter's consent and confusing communication. Additionally, the sign off process contributed to delays and complainants' frustration.

**Corporate Complaints Procedure**

There are situations where certain aspects of a complaint do not fall under the Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure; in these cases, the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure is utilised instead. During the 2024/25 period, the Local Authorities' Corporate Complaints team received **3** complaints related to Social Services, which were appropriately addressed according to the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The first complaint concerned a Subject Access Request (SAR) made under the Data Protection Act. The complainant expressed concern that information she expected to be recorded was not provided. The second complaint came from the director of a young person's residential home and was regarding the council's lack of response to the company's proposed price increase. The third complaint, which was Upheld, involved a data breach in Children and Family Services. The Council Annual Complaints Report details these complaints, along with others received across various directorates, in accordance with the Corporate Complaints Policy.

**Complaint Themes**

The nature of all complaints received to the directorate varied, and included:

**Table 4.**

<b>Themes of complaints received 2024/25</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Lack of support	18%
Staff conduct	16%
Lack of communication	14%
Failure to act in a way the complainant believes council should have	9%
Case management/review decisions	7%
Breach of confidentiality	5%
Request	5%
Factual Inaccuracies/False Accusations	4%
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Frequent changes of staff	3%
Delays	2%
Child/Adult protection process/outcome, decision for registration or de-registration	2%
Removal and reduction of service	2%
Safeguarding concerns raised	2%
Court order not followed	1%
Issue with assessment	1%

### Complaints regarding a lack of support

As seen in Table 4, the largest proportion of complaints received during this period (**18%**) centred around a perceived lack of support in various areas critical to our responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This theme reflects a range of concerns expressed by service users, carers, and families regarding the adequacy of the assistance provided.

In Adult Services, complainants reported struggling to manage their caring responsibilities and often felt overwhelmed and unsupported. Family members also voiced concerns about the level of involvement and support provided to their vulnerable relatives, believing that social services should be doing more to meet their needs.

In Children and Family Services, a recurring issue was the lack of support for families of disabled children and those caring for children with challenging behaviours. Parents described feeling isolated and under-supported in meeting their children's needs. Foster carers, including those in general placements and kinship arrangements, also raised concerns about the level of support they received in maintaining their caring roles. These concerns included the need for emotional support, particularly for carers facing allegations or involved in child protection procedures. At times, the lack of support referred to was financial. Additionally, complaints during the reporting period were received from or on behalf of young people leaving care who required assistance with finances, housing, or obtaining important documents.

This feedback highlights the importance of timely intervention across both Adult and Children and Family Services. Addressing these concerns remains a key priority for the directorate as we continue to work on improving the quality and responsiveness of the services we provide.



**Complaints regarding staff conduct**

During this reporting period, **16%** of complaints received related to the conduct of individual staff members. Complaints pertaining to the conduct of staff members are handled by the appropriate line manager in accordance with the Council's internal HR policies. These policies are designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken, when necessary. The relevant line manager who handles the complaint must take the concerns seriously, and thoroughly evaluate every concern raised relating to the conduct of their staff. The complaints department hold a record of staff names to support the identification of any reoccurring concerns and are able to highlight this to the appropriate managers. In compliance with legal confidentiality obligations inherent in each employee's contract of employment and the Data Protection Act (2018), the Council must not disclose the results of any investigations to a complainant.

Complainants may also be advised that they are entitled to raise a concern directly with the regulatory body, Social Care Wales or Social Work England, and are provided with details of how to also raise a concern separately, should they wish to do so.

**Complaints regarding safeguarding concerns**

During this reporting period, **4** complaints were raised that highlighted safeguarding concerns, which were addressed according to Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Of these complaints, **3** related to Children and Family Services, while **1** pertained to Adult Social Care.

In Children and Family Services, one complaint prompted a Section 47 investigation. The second complaint was referred to the Group Manager of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for review, and the complainant was advised on how to report any new concerns directly to the MASH. The concerns raised in the third complaint were forwarded to the allocated social worker for a thorough investigation; however, it was determined that these concerns did not meet the threshold for further investigation.

In Adult Services, one complaint was received regarding safeguarding concerns. This concern involved an allegation that a Support at Home carer had used a 'Steddy' aid with excessive force, resulting in injury to the service user's feet. In accordance with Wales Safeguarding procedures, the matter was referred to the Adult Safeguarding Team for a comprehensive investigation.

**8. HOW COMPLAINTS WERE RESOLVED and LESSONS LEARNED**

A variety of methods were used to resolve complaints, including:

**Liaison between Complaints Officers, Management and Complainants.**

- Work with complaints officers and relevant managers to identify and agree on a swift and informal resolution to issues raised.
- Facilitate meetings between managers and complainants to encourage honest and open communication, allowing for a better understanding of the complainants' concerns and desired outcomes.

**Collaboration and Best Practices.**

- Fostering positive working relationships with Social Services Complaints Departments across other Local Authorities in Wales to share best practice and ensure consistency in handling complaints. This collaboration helps ensure that complainants receive fair and equitable treatment. For particularly complex cases, we may engage in collaborative problem-solving while always maintaining confidentiality.

**Communication with Complainants.**

- Provide complainants with a clear explanation of the reasons behind decisions (both verbally and in writing).
- Maintain openness and honesty by offering apologies to complainants when necessary.
- Identify areas where services can be improved and ensure that corrective actions are recorded and followed up on.
- Offer reassessments where appropriate.

**Advocacy Advice/Support and Independent Consideration.**

- Direct complainants to advocacy services such as Llais, TGP Cymru, and BVC for additional support.
- Refer complaints to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure for independent review and consideration.

**Quality Assurance and Improvement.**

- Collaborate with the Quality Assurance Officer to discuss recurring issues and trends in complaints. This dialogue allows for a targeted focus on areas needing service quality improvement. The Quality Assurance Officer considers how identified learning outcomes align with broader service improvement plans.

A summary of key lessons learned during 2024/25 were as follows:

**Table 5**

Team	Lessons Learned / Actions Implemented
<p><b>Adult Social Care</b></p>	<p><b>Even though the complaint was 'Not Upheld', the IIO recommended that we ensure families new to social services are clearly informed about the role of social workers and expectations.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is reviewing the documentation for first-time service users to ensure they fully understand the role of social services.</p>
<p><b>Care Experienced Childrens Team</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure Section 47 outcomes are referenced in Reviews of care experienced children and care plans are rationalised.</b></p> <p>A note was placed on the children’s records to reflect the outcomes and actions taken, ensuring an accurate record of the Local Authority’s interventions.</p>

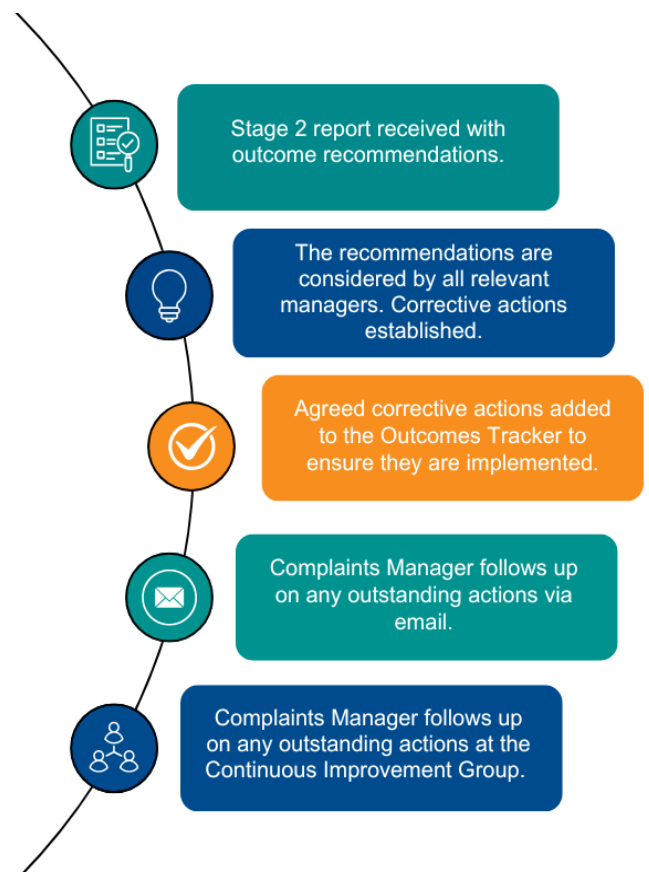
<p><b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b></p>	<p><b>Group Manager to try and improve relations between complainant and the service to encourage a robust needs assessment.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority offered this as a potential way forward with the Group Manager intervening to broker a relationship with the complainant, provided that the complainant agrees. If complainant agrees, a robust needs assessment will be undertaken with corresponding Care and Support Plans.</p>
<p><b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b></p>	<p><b>Social workers to read previous assessments and care plans before visits.</b></p> <p>Social workers have been reminded of the importance of reviewing previous assessments and care plans as part of the current assessment process.</p>
<p><b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b></p>	<p><b>Clearly communicate the rationale behind considering in-house care provision as the first option.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority clarified that under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, resources must be allocated fairly and sustainably. This is now being communicated more clearly to families.</p>
<p><b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b></p>	<p><b>Decisions about funding for placements are evidence-based.</b></p> <p>Outcome Surgery ensures decisions with financial implications are made based on evidence of assessed and agreed care and support needs.</p>
<p><b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b></p>	<p><b>Engage families actively in assessments and decision-making processes.</b></p> <p>Social workers have been reminded of their responsibility to actively involve families during the assessment process. Learning from this case has been integrated into training, supervision, and quality assurance processes.</p>
<p><b>Community Learning Disability Team</b></p>	<p><b>Reassess care packages and consider reinstating additional care hours if necessary.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority agreed to consider if additional care hours are warranted, however this decision is based on the outcome of the social worker's assessment.</p>
<p><b>Community Learning Disability Team</b></p>	<p><b>Make decisions on funding quickly, based on individual care needs.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has implemented a more efficient decision-making process at Outcomes Surgery for care plans with financial implications.</p>

<p><b>Community Learning Disability Team</b></p>	<p><b>Engage families in the assessment process and consider placements holistically.</b></p> <p>This practice is in place and has been reinforced through ongoing training, supervision, and quality assurance processes.</p>
<p><b>Community Learning Disability Team</b></p>	<p><b>Allocate cases with complexity to more experienced social workers.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is reviewing its allocation process to ensure cases are assigned to social workers with appropriate experience and expertise.</p>
<p><b>Community Learning Disability Team / Day Services</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure clear communication with day services about placements and assessments.</b></p> <p>Social workers are required to proactively engage with day services management to confirm service availability before offering or agreeing to services.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Department</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure consent is obtained at the outset when a representative files a complaint.</b></p> <p>Consent is obtained promptly in all cases where someone other than a parent or legal guardian is making a representation on behalf of a child.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Department</b></p>	<p><b>Improve communication between the Complaints Team and complainants.</b></p> <p>The Complaints Team has reflected on how to improve communication, especially during staff absences, by ensuring detailed handovers and using file notes to ensure all team members are aware of the complaint status.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Department</b></p>	<p><b>Provide guidance on the complaints process to Social Work Teams, ensuring timely responses.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated training materials, provided refresher training, and reminded staff of the eLearning module for staff on the complaints process.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Department</b></p>	<p><b>Develop a Quick Reference Guide for Social Workers on their responsibilities within the complaints process.</b></p> <p>The Quick Reference Guide been developed and will be made available to all staff to ensure clarity on their roles and the statutory timescales for responses.</p>
<p><b>East Locality Safeguarding Hub</b></p>	<p><b>Even though the complaint was 'Not Upheld', the IIO recommended reflection on whether earlier action should have been taken regarding the removal of children from the complainant.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority reflected on the timeliness of intervention in the response letter to the complainant.</p>

Fostering	<p><b>Strengthen training and support for foster carers, especially for those with children who have challenging behaviours.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is currently reviewing the training and support provided to foster carers, including developing targeted training for those caring for children with challenging or complex needs.</p>
Fostering	<p><b>Revisit record-keeping policies and ensure staff and Foster carers are clear about the importance of accurate, timely records.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated practice guidance, conducted workshops, and increased monitoring to ensure compliance with record-keeping standards.</p>
Fostering	<p><b>Ensure foster carer records are accurate, signed off, and located in the appropriate systems.</b></p> <p>A new Recording Policy has been implemented and staff have been trained on proper record-keeping procedures. Foster carer records are now regularly reviewed as part of annual reviews.</p>
Fostering	<p><b>Address issues of concern with foster carers during supervision sessions and maintain detailed incident records.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is reviewing its placement stability approach to identify early interventions that could prevent potential breakdowns. Staff and Foster carers are encouraged to maintain detailed incident records.</p>
Fostering / Care Experienced Childrens Team	<p><b>Introduce case consultations for early intervention and to reduce escalation.</b></p> <p>A new case consultation model has been introduced, allowing teams to book consultations with senior managers for advice and guidance on next steps.</p>
Fostering / Care Experienced Childrens Team	<p><b>Ensure that allegations against foster carers are properly tracked and handled, with staff aware of their roles and responsibilities.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated its Quality Assurance framework, embedded the Signs of Safety model, and created a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) post to oversee allegations against professionals, providing training and advice.</p>

<p><b>Fostering / Care Experienced Childrens Team / LADO</b></p>	<p><b>Managers should review how the case that led to a complaint could have been handled differently to improve communication and information sharing.</b></p> <p>A comprehensive learning event was held to discuss how communication breakdowns occurred and ways to improve communication between teams and foster carers.</p>
<p><b>Older People Mental Health</b></p>	<p><b>Even though the complaint was 'Not Upheld', the IIO recommended that we ensure families receive written records of reviews and care plans, especially in cases where there may be misunderstanding.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority will provide written records of care plans and reviews to families, where the individual's consent is obtained.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes Surgery</b></p>	<p><b>Make swift decisions when in-house services cannot meet an individual's needs, and ensure transparency in decision-making.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated its practice in the Outcomes Surgery to ensure swift decisions on external providers and clear communication on how decisions are made.</p>

In order to ensure that the directorate learns from complaints, and improvements are embedded effectively, the complaints department record, analyse and report on the learning from complaints. Improvements are monitored using an 'Outcomes Tracker' spreadsheet, which is reviewed periodically by the Complaints Manager to ensure that all outcomes and agreed actions have been completed. While some actions are straightforward and can be implemented quickly, others may require a period of work, time and commitment from the service to embed. The Complaints Manager also follows up on any outstanding actions during the 'Continuous Improvement Group' meetings in both Adult and Children and Family Services. This group, attended by team managers and senior managers within the service, ensures that all areas of improvements are being addressed. The flowchart to the right demonstrates the process we follow from the recommendations being made, to ensuring they are completed.



## Welsh Language Standards

There have been no complaints received during this reporting period that have been communicated via the medium of Welsh.

To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards all complaints publicity material, including leaflets and the complaints section of the Council's [website](#) have been translated and are readily available in Welsh and English.

## Compliments

Compliments are regarded as important information which can be used to identify and learn from good practice. All compliments are therefore recorded centrally, and details provided in management reports. As shown in Table 2 (page 12), **374** compliments were received during 2024/25 compared to 362 the previous year, a welcome **increase of 3%**. Please see a cross selection of the compliments received for 2024/25 in the table below:

**Table 6.**

<b>Compliments - Adult Social Care:</b>
<p>I wanted to say, my nan moved in earlier in the year and the reception and service received has been fantastic.</p> <p>Her moving in has given my family peace of mind that she is safe, secure and in a friendly, homely environment. Since her moving in, she has been having her medication regularly and eating set meals and can see the improvement from this in her.</p> <p>We had one incident where she fell and had to go to hospital, we were contacted straight away and everything was dealt with seamlessly.</p> <p>The staff have all been excellent and very friendly and welcoming when I come to visit. They have been very kind to us, while we have been going through some personal issues and when visiting have made us feel welcome.</p> <p>I would like to thank everyone for their care for my nan in the last year.</p>
<p>I would like to thank Z and his team C.D.A.T. they've been absolutely brilliant with me.. looked after me in a way.. never judge me at all. But without Z I'd be dead and his support..... they have been nothing but outstanding with me and how and how my life is changing for the better. I think all the team, but Z's been by the side off me or whenever I needed someone to talk to when I was down at any time. Don't know what else to say other than thank you 🙏 Legends!!</p>
<p>A sadly passed away last week, and B has worked with her and her family for many years and has built a very positive and trusting relationship with them, providing vast amounts of support over the years. The family thanked her for her support and 'for being there when we needed you most and for caring'.</p>
<p>I was speaking to one of the social workers in CMHT who are helping us out with some of our referrals and she said she takes her hat off to you all for the work that you do in the hospital, she has realised since helping how hard you all work and the processes you complete thought that it was nice for her to appreciate what you do.</p>

Glyn Cynffig is a clean and well run place with excellent staff, thank you. All of the staff have always been helpful. Thank you for all the help and support I have had while in Glyn Cynffig . It has changed my life for the better.

Not everyone will be lucky enough to have you as a social worker and my dysfunctional - but not overly traumatic background. It would be so much worse for someone else.

I will sing your praises throughout, of course.

If I never speak to you again, I need you to know that you made a real difference in mine and my mums life. I genuinely believe you were chosen to oversee her transition and that no one on the planet would've cared more than you.

That call you facilitated for the kids, my mum and me was literally the act of an angel.

Lovely to see you and C again today.

I'm literally blown away by my new hearing gadget.

I was excited to get it for the TV. Being able to wear it out is on another level.

I'm pleased and grateful with my NHS hearing aids, they're brilliant.

To have my hearing enhanced even more, too another level is absolutely amazing. The sound is so much clearer.

It's going to make so much difference to me, I cannot begin to tell you how much that means.

I feel confident that I won't have to concentrate as much wearing it out as I do with my hearing aids. I feel I'll be able to hear people talking normally without asking them to repeat themselves.

I feel like a kid at Christmas, with the best gift ever of superpower hearing! I could hear you clearly the other side of the street!!!!

There were tears after you both left. Happy, grateful tears.... they haven't stopped just yet.

I'm so excited and grateful to have it. I feel so lucky. It's blown my mind. It's flipping genius, and my new best friend.

It's going to make so much difference for me.

I cannot put into words how much it means.

Thank you both from the bottom of my heart.

I just wanted to share some lovely feedback I received this afternoon regarding yourself and a male colleague. I spoke to a senior manager in the Health Board today, who's mother receives Telecare and the Mobile Response service, her mother lives with MND. She described yourself and a male colleague as attending her mother and said how sympathetic and respectful you both were to her mother. She said she had set up a similar type of service down West Wales but said, "when you see a service in action for your own family members and they were so professional and amazing, you feel so grateful." She was saying how her mother has communication problems but you both took your time and were so respectful, that she was so impressed.

Dear D, E and all the team at Ty Cwm Ogwr, I just wanted to say a huge thank you to the care and support that you provided to my mum but also my dad. Living so far away, it was comforting to know that mum was in safe hands and being cared for by a team of such wonderfully kind and thoughtful people. Keep doing what you do - you are all amazing.



<b>Compliments – Children and Family Services:</b>
Thank you for working with me. I'm sad it's come to an end but thank you so much being there for me when I had no one. I'm going to miss you so much.
I can only attribute the change being a result of the commitment and hard work of the Social Worker who managed to develop a positive working relationship with F and her father. Additionally, professionals involved have shared nothing but positive praise about the way in which Social Worker, G progressed this case.
To H, Thank you so much everything you have done for me + my family. We would still be hitting a brick wall if it wasn't for all your hard work, support, determination + not giving up on us.
Thank you so much for all the help and encouragement over our time together. You don't know what difference it made to us.
Myself and my son have recently had the pleasure of working alongside social worker H from assessment team. I'd just like to thank her massively from the bottom of our hearts for all the guidance and support she has given myself and I over these last few weeks. Thank you for being there for I and always putting his needs first. He really opened up to H because he gained her trust instantly. Please could you forward this email on. We will be forever grateful, keep doing an amazing job you really are one in a million. We will always remember H thanks to all she's done. Thanks again.
Thank you so much for all your help, support, understanding and your dedication to helping our family. It is hugely appreciated. I feel truly blessed you were the social worker allocated to us. I wish you good luck for your future. You truly do make a difference.
I've just read through the report which was really good to read through. We're so pleased with all the positive feedback and that is testament to your support throughout our first steps in foster care over the last 18months / 2 years. You're a fabulous [supervising social worker] that continues to support and encourage us, reading what you have said about us shows just how well you know us all, this is so important to us and gives us the confidence to continue our journey supporting the children that come into our care.
Just a big thank you for getting who I am and who I could be and for being patient. I'm really grateful and thankful for all your help. All I can say is I got a house, my son, my life back and I just need my grandchildren back and I be completely happy. But again thank you J, I don't know how you do a job like you do.

## 9. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024/25

### Overall Reduction in Complaints

There has been a **6.5%** decrease in the total number of complaints received compared to the previous year. This decline reflects ongoing efforts to improve service delivery and communication and may indicate an increase in customer satisfaction with the quality of services provided by Social Services.

### Early Resolution of Complaints

A notable achievement this year is the high proportion of complaints resolved at an early, local level. The majority of concerns were successfully addressed informally or at Stage 1 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure, with only **5%** advancing to a formal

independent investigation (Stage 2). This emphasises the effectiveness of early resolution approaches and highlights the commitment of teams to respond promptly and constructively to concerns.

### **Implementation of the Most Significant Change (MSC) Approach**

This year marked the beginning of implementing the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology as a tool for learning from complaints. MSC enables the collection of compelling narratives that illustrate meaningful change and service impact. By providing qualitative insights that may not be evident through traditional complaint analysis, MSC will enhance our understanding of service effectiveness and support more reflective, person-centred service development.

### **Service Improvement Through Complaint Outcomes**

During the reporting period, independent complaints investigators at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure issued a significant number of service improvement recommendations; **49** in total. This process has required closer collaboration between the complaints manager, operational managers, and the quality assurance officer to ensure these insights inform service planning and development. Additionally, quarterly thematic reviews of complaint trends are shared with senior leaders and service managers through directorate management team meetings, team managers meetings, and continuous improvement groups. This helps to identify recurring issues, drive targeted improvements, and reinforce the role of complaints as a critical mechanism for learning and continuous improvement.

## **10. OBJECTIVES FOR 2025/26**

### **Strengthening the Culture of Learning and Improvement using the Most Significant Change (MSC) Model**

The first objective for the year ahead is to regularly capture and reflect on the experiences of the people we support, as well as the outcomes of interventions and the impact of complaint resolutions using the MSC model. This approach fosters a culture of continuous learning, helps identify patterns and best practices, and enables us to adapt our services to reflect service users' lived experiences, thereby improving the quality of service delivery.

### **Further Develop Accessible Complaints Information**

Create complaint information in formats that are accessible to young people, individuals with learning difficulties, and those with hearing or visual impairments. All complaints materials to be available in easy read, audio, braille and child-friendly formats. Ensuring this information is accessible promotes inclusivity, allowing all individuals to engage fully with the complaints process. This builds trust and empowers a wider range of service users to voice their concerns, ultimately enriching the department's understanding of diverse perspectives.

### **Collaborate with the Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP)**

Link with SCWDP to ensure that training materials are readily accessible to all staff members. Collaborate to keep training resources current, inclusive, and available in formats that cater to different learning styles and roles within the department. Regularly reviewing and refining these materials will facilitate a consistent understanding of procedures and

responsibilities across teams, improve adherence to timescales, boost staff confidence, and enhance complaint handling standards and outcomes for complainants.

**Further Expand the Pool of Independent Investigators**

We currently share information about high-quality Investigating Officers with neighbouring local authorities on a reciprocal basis. This year, one of our objectives is to explore additional opportunities to attract qualified candidates to this role. Increasing our pool of independent investigators will help alleviate pressure on existing resources, support adherence to timelines, and ensure the provision of high-quality investigations. Enhanced investigative capacity will contribute to timely and consistent complaint resolutions and ensure investigations remain impartial.

**Promote a Positive Complaints Culture**

In the coming year, we aim to conduct a feedback survey to identify areas for improvement, streamline processes, and foster a positive attitude toward complaints as opportunities for learning and development. This initiative will help clarify the complaints process and the roles within the complaints department, reduce defensiveness, and position complaints as valuable opportunities for growth and service excellence, thereby improving overall morale and attitudes toward complaints.

**11. EQUALITIES**

A screening for equality impact has been carried out in relation to the representation and complaints procedure. There is no negative impact on the protected equality characteristics.

There have been no complaints in relation to equality impacts received during the reporting period in relation to the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure.

We do not currently request or record equalities information from complainants. As a result, we are unable to report on the proportion of complaints received from individuals with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

**Report prepared for Claire Marchant  
Statutory Director of Social Services  
By the Compliments and Complaints Resolution Manager**

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<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11 SEPTEMBER 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL &amp; REGULATORY SERVICES, HR &amp; CORPORATE POLICY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>MERYL LAWRENCE SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER – SCRUTINY</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>The work of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Council’s Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>The Council’s Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.</b>  <b>The Committee is asked to consider and agree its Forward Work Programme, identify any specific information it wishes to be included in and any invitees they wish to attend for the reports for the next two Committee meetings, identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the criteria set out in the report, and consider the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet for this Committee.</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Present the Committee with the Forward Work Programme attached as **(Appendix A)** for consideration and approval;
- b) Request any specific information the Committee identifies to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;
- c) Request the Committee to identify whether there are presently any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.5 of this report;

- d) Present the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet (**Appendix B**) to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings;
- e) Advise that the Committee's Forward Work Programme as approved will be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) for information, together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.
- 2.2 It also provides for the Committee to propose items for the Forward Work Programme having regard for the Council's Corporate Priorities and Risk Management framework. Where a matter for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee also falls within the remit of one or more other Committees, the decision as to which Committee will consider it will be resolved by the respective Chairs or, if they fail to agree, the Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Best Practice / Guidance

- 2.3 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the Forward Work Programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be coordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 2.4 Forward Work Programmes need to be manageable to maximize the effective use of the limited time and resources of Scrutiny Committees. It is not possible to include every topic proposed. Successful Scrutiny is about looking at the right topic in the right way and Members need to be selective, while also being able to demonstrate clear arguments for including or excluding topics.
- 2.5 The CfGS's guide to effective work programming 'A Cunning Plan?' makes the following reference to the importance of good work programming:

*'Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well it can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.'*

### 3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Following the approval of the schedule of Scrutiny Committee meeting dates at the Annual Meeting of Council on 14 May 2025, the standing statutory reports to Scrutiny Committees of: the Corporate Plan, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget, Performance and Budget Monitoring, etc. have been mapped to the appropriate timely meeting dates into a Forward Work Programme.
- 3.2 The Forward Work Programmes for each Scrutiny Committee have been prepared using a number of difference sources, including:
- Corporate Risk Assessment;
  - Directorate Business Plans;
  - Previous Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme report topics / minutes;
  - Committee / Member proposed topics;
  - Policy Framework;
  - Cabinet Work Programme;
  - Discussions with Corporate Directors;
  - Performance Team regarding the timing of performance information.
- 3.3 There are items where there is a statutory duty for Policy Framework documents to be considered by Scrutiny, e.g., the MTFS including draft budget proposals scheduled for consideration in January 2026, following which COSC will make conclusions and recommendations in a report on the overall strategic overview of Cabinet's draft Budget proposals to the meeting of Cabinet in February 2026.
- 3.4 An effective Forward Work Programme will identify the issues that the Committee wishes to focus on during the year and provide a clear plan. However, at each meeting the Committee will have an opportunity to review this as the Forward Work Programme Update will be a standing item on the Agenda, detailing which items are scheduled for future meetings and be requested to clarify any information to be included in reports and the list of invitees. The Forward Work Programme will remain flexible and will be reported to each COSC meeting for information.

#### Identification of Further Items

- 3.5 The Committee are reminded that the Scrutiny selection criteria used by Scrutiny Committee Members to consider, select and prioritise items emphasises the need to consider issues such as impact, risk, performance, budget and community perception when identifying topics for investigation to maximise the impact scrutiny can have on a topic and the outcomes for people. The criteria which can help the Committee come to a decision on whether to include a referred topic, are set out below:

#### Recommended Criteria for Selecting Scrutiny Topics:

- PUBLIC INTEREST: The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;
- ABILITY TO CHANGE: Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence, and add value to;

PERFORMANCE:	Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council is not performing well;
EXTENT:	Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the County Borough, or a large number of the Authority's service users or its population;
REPLICATION:	Work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

#### Reasons to Reject Scrutiny Topics:

- The issue is already being addressed / being examined elsewhere and change is imminent.
- The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and can be referred there).
- Scrutiny involvement would have limited / no impact upon outcomes.
- The topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial.
- The topic is too broad to make a review realistic and needs refining / scoping.
- New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year.
- The topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change / reconfiguration.

#### Corporate Parenting

- 3.6 Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards care experienced children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'Corporate Parent', therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for care experienced children and young people in Bridgend.
- 37 In this role, it is suggested that Members consider how each item they consider affects care experienced children and young people, and in what way can the Committee assist in these areas.
- 3.8 Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising them of the ongoing work of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.
- 3.9 The Forward Work Programme for the Committee is attached as **Appendix A** for the Committee's consideration.
- 3.10 The Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings is attached as **Appendix B**.
- 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 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:

- Long-term - The approval of this report will assist in the planning of Scrutiny business in both the short-term and in the long-term on its policies, budget and service delivery.
- Prevention - The early preparation of the Forward Work Programme allows for the advance planning of Scrutiny business where Members are provided an opportunity to influence and improve decisions before they are made by Cabinet.
- Integration - The report supports all the wellbeing objectives.
- Collaboration - Consultation on the content of the Forward Work Programme has taken place with the Corporate Management Board, Heads of Service and Elected Members.
- Involvement - Advanced publication of the Forward Work Programme ensures that stakeholders can view topics that will be discussed in Committee meetings and are provided with the opportunity to engage.

5.2 When setting its Forward Work Programme, the Committee should consider how each item they propose to scrutinise assists in the achievement of the Council's 4 Wellbeing Objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** as follows:

1. A prosperous place with thriving communities
2. Creating modern, seamless public services
3. Enabling people to meet their potential
4. Supporting our most vulnerable

## **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 The Committee should consider how each item they scrutinise affects climate change, the Council's Net Zero Carbon 2030 target and how it meets the Council's commitments to protect and sustain the environment over the long term. There are no Climate Change or Nature Implications arising from this report.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 The Committee should consider how each item they scrutinise affects care experienced children and young people, and in what way the Committee can assist in these areas. Safeguarding is everyone's business and means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications arising from this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- a) Consider and approve the Forward Work Programme for the Committee in **Appendix A**.
  - b) Identify any specific information the Committee wishes to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;
  - c) Identify whether there are presently any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.5 of this report.
  - d) Note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in **Appendix B** to track outstanding responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings;
  - e) Note that the Committee's Forward Work Programme as approved will be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information, together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.

## **Background documents**

None.

**Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**2025-26 Forward Work Programme**

<b>Wednesday, 9 July 2025 at 10.00am</b>		
<b>Report Topic</b>	<b>Information Required / Committee's Role</b>	<b>Invitees</b>
<b>Regional Partnership Agreement</b>	Pre-Decision	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Adult Social Care; Group Manager – Integrated Community Services Manager; and</p> <p><b><u>External</u></b> Regional Integrated Services Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg; and Director, Primary Care, Community &amp; Mental Health – Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board</p>

<b>Thursday 11 September 2025 at 10.00am</b>		
<b>Report Topics</b>	<b>Any Specific Information Requested</b>	<b>Invitees</b>
<b>Social Services Annual Report 2024-25</b>	Pre-Decision	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing;</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Adult Social Care; Head of Children and Family Services. Group Manager - Prevention and Wellbeing; Group Manager – Commissioning; and Group Manager - Business Strategy, Performance &amp; Improvement.</p>
<b>Social Services Representations and Complaints 2024-25</b>	Pre-Decision	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing;</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing.</p>

**APPENDIX A**

**Thursday, 25 September 2025 at 10.00am**

Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<p><b>Care Inspectorate Wales Fostering Service Inspection - June 2025</b></p> <p>and</p> <p><b>Care Inspectorate Wales Improvement Check of Children and Family Services - June 2025</b></p>	<p>CIW to present the Improvement Check report to the Committee.</p>	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Children and Family Services; Deputy Head of Children and Family Services;</p> <p><b><u>External</u></b> Representatives from Care Inspectorate Wales</p>

**Thursday, 6 November 2025 at 10.00am**

Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<p><b>Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report 2024-25</b></p>		<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Adult Social Care; Head of Children and Family Services; Group Manager – Information, Advice and Assistance and Safeguarding; Team Manager – Older People Mental Health; and Education and Community Safety Leads</p>
<p><b>Community Hubs Strategy</b></p>	<p>Including Libraries post consultation.</p>	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing;</p> <p><b><u>External</u></b> Chief Executive – Awen</p>

**APPENDIX A**

**Thursday, 4 December 2025 at 10.00am**

Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<b>Halo, Leisure Arrangements and Wellbeing</b>	Including plans and various programmes provided e.g. carer's offer.	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing;</p> <p><b><u>External</u></b> Active Communities Manager – Halo Leisure</p>

**Thursday, 12 March 2026 at 10.00am**

Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<b>Assisted Transport Policy Implementation Progress</b>	Post implementation progress report	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p>
<b>Learning Disability Transformation Programme Progress</b>	Post implementation progress report	<p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Adult Social Care; Policy Officer – Social Care;</p> <p><b><u>External</u></b> Representatives from People First</p>

**Monday, 27 April 2026 at 10.00am**

Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
<b>Provision of Accommodation Based Regulated Support Services in Bridgend</b>	<p>Post implementation progress report</p> <p>To include information setting out the provision of accommodation based regulated support services in Bridgend to include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. whether they are private, public or charity sector;</li> <li>b. how staff are contracted; and</li> <li>c. the ownership of the buildings.</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Cabinet Member</u></b> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing</p> <p><b><u>Officers</u></b> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Adult Social Care.</p>

**Briefings and Workshops:**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Information Required / Committee's Role</b>	<b>Invitees</b>
<b>Overview – Social Services &amp; Wellbeing Directorate / Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act</b>	Attendance from: Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing Head of Adult Social Care Head of Children and Family Services Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing	<b>To be scheduled.</b>
<b>The Replacement System for CareDirector (WCCIS)</b>	The Committee requested a briefing on COR-2024-01 on the Corporate Risk Assessment: The threat to business continuity if the Council is unable to procure and implement major ICT systems which support critical services such as a replacement system for CareDirector (WCCIS). <i>CareDirector</i> is a Cloud-based case management solution for social care organisations that supports integrated working across health and social care.	<b>Members and officers for the Briefing and Workshop – TBD.</b>  <b>To be scheduled in early 2026 in partnership with IT.</b>
<b>Use of Artificial Intelligence within Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate</b>	The Committee <b>recommended</b> that there be an all Member briefing on the use of artificial intelligence within the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and how it is envisaged it could safely aid a reduction in staff numbers.	<b>This will form part of the Digital Strategy which will be reported to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Pre-Decision.</b>  <b>To be scheduled after the Digital Strategy has been considered at COSC.</b>

**Items to be Scheduled to the Committee's Forward Work Programme**

- Support for Care Leavers (including input from Employability and Housing)  
  
(Will be a joint report between Social Services, Health and Wellbeing and the Communities and Housing Directorates)
- Regional Partnership Agreement Progress Update (12 months from July 2025)

**Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING ACTION SHEET 2025-2026**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Response</b>
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee reiterated their recommendation made on 1 May 2025, expressing concern at the number of acronyms being used within reports causing a barrier to full understanding of reports and terms included. and <b>recommended</b> that future reports contain a glossary of abbreviations to assist the Committee and the public. In addition, the Committee <b>recommended</b> that reports should be written in plain English avoiding unnecessarily complex language.	Scrutiny / Corporate Director -Social Services and Wellbeing	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee expressed concern regarding the number of levels of governance set out in Figure 2 of the Agreement highlighting how it would involve multiple meetings of the same people and <b>recommended</b> that consideration be given to reducing the levels and, in particular, the removal of the Integrated Leadership Board.  However, given that the service user voice could be lost if the Integrated Leadership Board level of governance	Regional Integrated Services Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>

**APPENDIX B**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		was removed, the Committee <b>recommended</b> that this be picked up in another level of governance.			
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee expressed concern that despite reliance on other stakeholders, there appeared to be little reference to third sector and voluntary organisations in the Agreement and were advised of the possible challenges of obtaining funding without reference being made to them. The Committee therefore <b>recommended</b> that third sector and voluntary organisations be fully described in the Agreement.	Regional Integrated Services Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee expressed concern that ‘Outcomes’ had been replaced with ‘Output’ in the <i>Outcomes and Performance and Measurement Framework</i> (Appendix 1) and <b>recommended</b> that this be addressed to provide clearer understanding.	Regional Integrated Services Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee acknowledged the innovative and transformational work taking place in the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and that the Community Resource Team’s delivery model was being replicated as best practice across the other local authorities within the region and <b>recommended</b> that correspondence be	Scrutiny/Chair	<b>ACTIONED</b> - Letter sent on 2 September 2025.	Complete



**APPENDIX B**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		sent to the Corporate Director recognising the work thanking her and her team.			
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee <b>requested</b> that information regarding the Members information day being arranged by the Regional Partnership highlighting the regional working arrangements be shared with Members once arranged.	Corporate Director -Social Services and Wellbeing	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	Members <b>requested</b> that the PowerPoint slides and the video shared with the Committee during the meeting be shared with Members.	Corporate Director -Social Services and Wellbeing	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Complete
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee <b>requested</b> the case studies demonstrating hospital avoidance in cases of complex needs and safeguarding concerns referred to by the Group Manager – Integrated Community Services – Community Networks.	Group Manager – Integrated Community Services – Community Networks	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>
9 Jul 25	Regional Partnership Agreement	The Committee <b>requested</b> detail of the membership of the Integrated Leadership Board.	Regional Integrated Services Director for Cwm Taf Morgannwg	<b>ACTIONED</b> – response and information circulated 4 September 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>
9 Jul 25	Forward Work Programme Update	The Committee <b>requested</b> that the Regional Partnership Agreement be	Scrutiny/Chair of Committee	Scrutiny to action in Work Planning	Complete

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Response</b>
		added to their Forward Work Programme for review after 12 months.		Meetings with the Chair and Corporate Director. Item added to the Committee's Forward Work Programme.	

**Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING ACTION SHEET 2024-2025**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
8 Jul 24	Building on Strengths, Improving Lives - A Three- Year Plan for Sustainable Care and Support for Adults in Bridgend County Borough Council	The Committee requested that Members receive information about the BAVO consultation exercise by email.	Scrutiny / Corporate Director -Social Services and Wellbeing	The Head of Adult Social Care met with the Chief Executive Officer of BAVO as part of his induction on 22nd July. Particular areas of focus will be to ensure an effective interface between BCBC's prevention and wellbeing offer and third sector community services.	Complete
1 May 25	Early Help, Prevention and Edge of Care	<p>The Committee expressed concern that early intervention services may not be prioritised as they are non-statutory and <b>recommended</b> that a letter be written to the Welsh Government (and copied to the local Senedd Members) setting out the following:</p> <p>a. that Early Help and prevention are central to the Council's strategy of</p>	Scrutiny/Chair of SOSC 2	<p><b>ACTIONED:</b></p> <p>Response and information circulated 22 August 2025.</p>	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>

**APPENDIX B**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		<p>supporting and protecting the most vulnerable in our community;                      b. that it would present a corporate risk to the Authority if such services are not sufficiently funded; and                      c. highlighting the impact:                      i) of late notification and retrospective grant funding on financial and workforce planning;                      ii) on grant funded staff on rolling annual contracts; and                      iii) of the lack of inflationary uplift on budgetary pressures and workforce funding.</p>			
1 May 25	Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection of Bridgend County Borough Council's Regulated Services in Adult Social Care	The Committee expressed concern about the lack of clarity regarding the responsibility for meeting the cost of national insurance contributions for employees of commissioned services and <b>recommended</b> that a letter be written to the Welsh Government to request a clear indication of whether or not these contributions will be met by additional funding in the Authority's settlement or whether this will be an additional cost pressure to Bridgend.	Scrutiny	<b>ACTIONED:</b>  Response and information circulated 22 August 2025.	Follow link <a href="#">here</a>