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Bridgend County Borough Council

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Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 3 September 2026

Dear Councillor,

SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 10 September 2026 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 2008 (including whipping declarations)

3 Approval of Minutes

5 - 14

To receive for approval the minutes of a meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 of the 8th of June 2026 and the 09th of July 2026

By receiving this Agenda Pack electronically you will save the Authority approx. £5.28 in printing costs

4 Draft Social Services Annual Report 2025-26

15 - 102

Invitees

Councillor Jane Gebbie - Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing

Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing

Kelvin Barlow – Head of Adult Social Care

David Wright - 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 2025-26

103 - 146

Invitees

Councillor Jane Gebbie - Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing

Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing

Kelvin Barlow – Head of Adult Social Care

David Wright - Head of Children and Family Services

Debbie Morgan - Group Manager - Business Strategy, Performance & Improvement

Sarah Tripp - Compliments and Complaints Resolution Manager

6 Shared Lives

147 - 244

Invitees

Councillor Jane Gebbie - Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing

Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing

Joe Boyle – Commissioning and Service Development Officer

Richard Thomas - Strategic Planning and Commissioning Officer

Paul Marchant – Shared Lives Team Manager – Vale of Glamorgan Council

Linda Woodley - Operational Manager for Learning Disability Services, Vale of Glamorgan Council

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

8 Forward Work Programme Update

245 - 264

9 Urgent Items

To consider any items of business that by reason of special circumstances the chairperson is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency in accordance with the Procedure Rules set out in the Constitution.

Note: This will be a Remote meeting and Members and Officers will be attending 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 or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer Legal, Regulatory and Electoral Services

Councillors:

S Aspey

F D Bletsoe

S J Bletsoe

JPD Blundell

N Clarke

P Davies

P Ford

D M Hughes

RM James

W J Kendall

M Lewis

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

AJ Williams

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 MONDAY, 8 JUNE 2026 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor F D Bletsoe – Chairperson

S J Bletsoe

JPD Blundell

AJ Williams

Present Virtually

N Clarke
M Lewis

P Davies

RM James

W J Kendall

Apologies for Absence

P Ford, D M Hughes, J Llewellyn-Hopkins and R Williams

Invitees:

Councillor Jane Gebbie
Councillor Martyn Jones

Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
Cabinet Member for Education and Young People

Claire Marchant
Lindsay Harvey

Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing
Corporate Director – Education, Early Years & Young People

David Wright
Raeanna Grainger
Gayle Shenton
Tanya Smith

Deputy Head of Children and Family Services
Group Manager, IAA & Safeguarding
Head of Learning
Head of Strategy, Early Years and Youth

Officers:

Jessica McLellan
Oscar Roberts

Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer - Committees

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Amanda Williams – Personal – Item 4 – Community Governor and Chair of Governors at Coety Primary School
- Item 8 – Member of Llais

66. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of the meeting of Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 12 March 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	8 June 2026

67. 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' - the Bridgend Response to the North Wales Child Practice Review

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> Following detailed consideration and discussions with a Cabinet Member and Senior Officers the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information: Recommendations 1. The Committee recommended that a letter be sent to Welsh Government asking them to consider making safeguarding training mandatory for all school governors. 2. The Committee expressed concern regarding the level of Chair of Governor attendance at the termly meetings arranged by the Head of Learning and whether they are undertaking the mandatory training and recommended that the Corporate Director write to all Chairs of Governors sharing a copy of the report and setting out their roles and responsibilities. 3. The Committee discussed whether routes to safeguarding were clear to all school Governors and parents and recommended that this be a standing item on the Agenda of the Chair of Governor termly meetings arranged by the Head of Learning and that routes to safeguarding are highlighted to parents in a newsletter and on parental apps.
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	4. The Committee recommended that the report be shared with Members of the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information. 5. The Committee referred to the <i>Training on Child Sexual Abuse Awareness & Understanding Men who Sexually Abuse Children</i> set out in the Action Plan appended to the report and recommended that the reference to <i>Men</i> be changed to <i>People</i> both in the title of the training and its content. 6. The Committee discussed the importance and responsibility of the role of Members as Corporate Parents and recommended that consideration be given to making the Corporate Parenting training mandatory and that the training is repeated for all Members shortly. Additional Information Requested 7. The Committee requested copies of the responses from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, South Wales Police and Welsh Government to the North Wales Child Practice Review. 8. The Committee requested detail of how safeguarding leads in schools are selected.
Date Decision Made	8 June 2026

68. Corporate Parenting Champion Nomination

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> 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.
Date Decision Made	8 June 2026

69. Information Report - Corporate Performance Quarter 3 2025-26

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Committee considered the content of the Corporate Performance Quarter 3 2025-26 report, the
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	Corporate Performance Dashboard Quarter 3 2025-26 and the Regulatory Tracker updated for Quarter 3 2025-26 within the remit of the Committee and had regard to the dashboard and the tracker when considering the Committee's Forward Work Programme report.
Date Decision Made	8 June 2026

70. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Committee approved the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A subject to the inclusion of the following to be reviewed by a Working Group in the first instance, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B and noted that the FWP as approved by the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information: a. Welsh Government Review of Safeguarding Boards; and b. Review of Section 5 of Wales Safeguarding Procedures.
Date Decision Made	8 June 2026

71. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	8 June 2026

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

The meeting closed at 13:06.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2026 AT 10:00

Present Virtually

Councillor F D Bletsoe – Chairperson

S J Bletsoe
D M Hughes
AJ Williams

JPD Blundell
RM James

N Clarke
W J Kendall

P Davies
J Llewellyn-Hopkins

Apologies for Absence

S Aspey, P Ford, M Lewis and R Williams

Invitees

Councillor Jane Gebbie

Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member Social Services, Health and Wellbeing

Claire Marchant
Mark Wilkinson
Richard Thomas
Joe Boyle

Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
Group Manager – Learning Disability and Mental Health
Strategic Planning and Commissioning Officer
Commissioning and Service Development Officer

Paul Marchant

Shared Lives Team Manager – Vale of Glamorgan Council

Officers:

Jessica Mclellan
Michael Pitman

Scrutiny Officer
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services

Declarations of Interest

Councillor RM James – Item 3 – Personal – Wife is the Chairperson of the Bridgend Fostering Panel

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Shared Lives

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> The Committee thanked the Service User and Shared Lives Carer Invitees for attending the meeting and for their valued contributions to the discussions. Following detailed consideration and discussions with a Cabinet Member, Officers and Invitees the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information: Recommendations 1. Given that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is designed to cover the cheapest 30% of properties in the rental area and the disparity between the cheapest market rent of properties in Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, the Committee expressed concern that residents of Bridgend in private accommodation are at detriment and recommended a review of LHA in line with the Consumer Price Index. 2. The Committee expressed pride and gratitude for the Shared Lives Service, that many people were likely to be unaware of it and recommended that a briefing be brought to full Council to raise awareness, which may assist with recruitment of more carers and growing the service. Requests for Additional Information 3. The Committee expressed concern regarding the potential impact of the proposed changes on individuals and Band 1 carers, acknowledged that options to explore the no detriment approach were ongoing, requested that the Shared Lives report be put on their Forward Work Programme for September and that the following be included within the scope of the report: a. Detail of the work being undertaken by the Financial Safeguarding Team to include the impact of the proposed changes on individuals' disposable income and affordability; b. Detail of all of the proposed changes to terms and conditions; c. Full cost analysis of the cost of a Shared Lives Placement compared to alternative accommodation such as Supported Living, etc.; d. The rationale for aligning individuals' contributions to the same level as those in the Vale of Glamorgan who receive a higher level of Local Housing Allowance; e. The outcome of discussions with legal regarding a possible two-tier approach to ensure Band 1
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	carers are at no detriment; f. Detail regarding how each carer and service user were consulted and how the impact on each was presented and explained to them and their responses; g. The consultation paper and all anonymised responses to the consultation as an Appendix; and h. The Banding criteria as an Appendix.
Date Decision Made	9 July 2026

73. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Committee approved the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A subject to the inclusion of the Shared Lives report in their September meeting, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B, noted that the FWP as approved by the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Date Decision Made	9 July 2026

74. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	9 July 2026

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

The meeting closed at 12:52.

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Meeting of:	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	10 SEPTEMBER 2026
Report Title:	DRAFT SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025 -26
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	DEBBIE MORGAN GROUP MANAGER, BUSINESS STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE & IMPROVEMENT
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The Social Services Annual Report 2025-26 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 during the past year. The report reflects on 2025-26, highlighting achievements and challenges whilst outlining priorities for 2026-27. This is the second report prepared under the revised Welsh Government guidance, with performance assessed across the four themes of People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration, and Well-being. As well as the performance assessment section of the report, it includes a Director's Summary, information on leadership, workforce, resources, inspections and reviews, and complaints and representations. The report is informed by feedback from people who use services, helping to ensure that performance is evaluated through the experiences of those who access and deliver services. The report highlights key achievements during 2025-26, including workforce stability, positive service performance, strengthened early intervention and preventative support, increased local placement capacity for children, further development of community-based support for adults, and

	continued improvements in safeguarding arrangements. It also identifies key risks and financial pressures, including increasing demand and complexity of need, workforce sustainability, placement sufficiency, and the long-term financial sustainability of social care services.
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the draft Social Services Annual Report 2025-26 (**Appendix one**) to the Committee for scrutiny of its contents including analysis of performance, impact made, areas for improvement and priorities for 2026-27. This is an opportunity for pre-scrutiny prior to it being presented to Council on 23rd September 2026.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), Welsh Government developed a performance framework to ensure local authorities report on and evaluate performance against the well-being outcomes of the Act. 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 In May 2024, Welsh Government and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS Cymru) issued revised guidance for Social Services Annual Reports, <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-05/local-authority-social-services-annual-report-directors-report-guidance.pdf> reflecting developments in social care since 2017, including the Performance and Improvement Framework and stakeholder feedback.
- 2.3 The 2025-26 Annual Report is the second report prepared under the revised guidance. It supports the Director of Social Services in meeting their statutory duty to report annually to Council on the effectiveness of social services within the local authority area and has been developed in accordance with the Performance and Improvement Framework.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 As outlined in the annual report guidance <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-05/local-authority-social-services-annual-report-directors-report-guidance.pdf> (the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places a duty on local authorities to promote the well-being of people who need care and support, and

carers who need support, through a person centered and preventative approach to service delivery.

- 3.2 The report guidance sets the structure and content of the report, including a Director's Summary, a performance assessment against the four themes, and information relating to leadership, workforce, resources, inspections, complaints, and priorities for improvement.
- 3.3 This report forms an integral part of the Performance and Improvement Framework evaluating performance against eight quality standards, organised under four key themes: People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration, and Well-being (table one).

Table One

Theme	Quality Standards
People	1. All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them. 2. Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision.
Prevention	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. 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.
Partnership and Integration	5. Effective partnerships are in place to commission and fully deliver fully integrated, high-quality sustainable outcomes for people. 6. People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners.
Well-being	7. People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm. 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.

- 3.4 Performance against each standard is considered within the Performance Assessment section of the report. The standards provide the framework for Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to assess the quality and effectiveness of local authority social services. For each standard, the report outlines progress and achievements

during 2025-26, identifies areas for further improvement, and sets out priorities for 2026-27.

3.5 The Director's Summary provides an overview of the directorate's key achievements, risks and challenges, as well as overarching priorities and objectives for the year ahead.

3.5.1 Summary of Key Achievements in 2025-26:

- Improved workforce stability through a reduction in agency staffing and growth in permanent recruitment.
- Sustained strong service performance and positive regulatory outcomes across social care services.
- Strengthened early intervention and preventative support, contributing to a reduction in statutory interventions for children and families.
- Enhanced support for care experienced children and foster carers.
- Further developed preventative, integrated and community-based support for adults.
- Strengthened safeguarding arrangements through continued development of integrated and multi-agency approaches, including excellent joint working with HMP Parc.
- Progressed service transformation, quality assurance and partnership working to support continuous improvement.

3.5.2 Summary of Key Risks:

- Sustaining workforce wellbeing, recruitment and retention.
- Rising demand and complexity across social care services continues to present challenges to the timely and effective delivery of safeguarding services.
- Sufficiency and stability of local care placements for children and young people.
- Increasing demand particularly within Adult Social Care, without additional resources.
- Long-term financial sustainability in the context of growing demand and service pressures.

3.5.3 Summary of Overarching Priorities for 2026-27:

- Maintain a stable, skilled and supported workforce.
- Strengthen prevention and early intervention across all service areas.
- Increase local placement capacity and improve outcomes for care experienced children.
- Respond sustainably to increasing adult social care demand.
- Continue to embed safeguarding learning, strengthening protection for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Deliver digital transformation and improve service efficiency and effectiveness.
- Ensure financial sustainability through transformation, commissioning and partnership working.

- 3.6 The Annual Report is also informed by feedback from people who use our services. This helps ensure that the experiences and views of those directly involved in social care and well-being services are reflected in the assessment of performance and the identification of areas for improvement.
- 3.7 It is important to note that the report also recognises the collective corporate contribution of the Council, partner organisations and the wider social services and well-being system in supporting vulnerable children, adults, carers and families across the county borough. The report acknowledges the vital role of statutory, health, third sector, community, cultural and leisure partners, and pays tribute to the dedication, professionalism, and compassion of the workforce across both preventative and statutory services.

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 delivery of social care and well-being services under the SSWBA supports the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Through promoting independence, wellbeing and inclusion, and by supporting children, young people, adults, carers and families to achieve their personal outcomes, these services help create a healthier and more equal Bridgend.
- 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 the report.
- **Long Term:** Social Care and Wellbeing Services continue to operate within a context of increasing demand and complexity. The report highlights the importance of strengthening preventative approaches that build resilience, promote independence and support sustainable services. Through investment in early help and family support, more children are supported to remain safely within their families and communities, helping to reduce the need for statutory intervention. Similarly, the Council's reablement service helps adults regain confidence and independence following illness or hospital admission, reducing reliance on ongoing care and support, supporting long-term wellbeing.
 - **Prevention:** The report highlights service developments that support the preventative approach promoted by the SSWBA and reflected in the revised

performance framework. Preventative services continue to support people to access help at an earlier stage within their own communities, promoting independence, strengthening community connections and building resilience. Through Community Navigators and Local Community Co-ordinators, individuals and families are supported to make the most of their strengths, local networks and community resources, helping to prevent or delay the need for more formal care and support.

- **Integration:** Effective partnership working is central to delivering seamless, person centred services and improving outcomes for people. The Partnership and Integration section of the report highlights how we work with partners including Awen Cultural Trust and Halo Leisure Trust to promote well-being and support people to remain active, connected and independent within their communities. We also work with Tros Gynnal Plant, who support the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, and People First Bridgend to ensure that the views of children, young people and adults with learning disabilities inform service development and delivery.
- **Collaboration:** The report highlights the importance of collaboration in the planning and delivery of social care and well-being services. Through established partnership arrangements, including the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board and Regional Safeguarding Board, the Council works with partners to maximise resources, share expertise and improve outcomes. During 2025-26, this collaborative approach supported the implementation of the Regional Threshold and Eligibility Support Guidance, promoting a shared understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, supporting consistent decision making and strengthening multi-agency approaches to protect vulnerable children and young people.
- **Involvement:** The people who use our services are our key stakeholders, and it is essential their views and experiences inform service delivery and improvement. The People section of the report highlights how the directorate supports voice, choice and control through engagement, co-production and feedback mechanisms. This includes work with Bridgend Carers Centre to improve support for carers of people living with dementia, using carers' experiences and feedback to shape support networks, activities and services to ensure support is responsive to their needs.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no climate change and 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 report.
- 7.2 Key safeguarding actions are noted within the well-being section and include:
- strengthened corporate safeguarding arrangements through improved oversight, self-assessment and workforce awareness.

- embedding learning from Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs) to strengthen safeguarding practice, workforce awareness and regional training.
- implementation of the Regional Exploitation Strategy to strengthen multi-agency responses to child exploitation.
- enhanced multi-agency working with HMP Parc which has succeeded in reducing harm in the secure estate.
- establishment of a Learning Disability Safeguarding Group to increase safeguarding awareness and inform safeguarding practice through lived experience.

7.3 The Directorate's safeguarding priorities for 2026-27 include:

- fully embedding the Regional Exploitation Strategy to strengthen protection and support for children and young people at risk of harm.
- continuing to embed learning from SUSRs to strengthen safeguarding practice.
- using performance, quality assurance and customer feedback to drive continuous improvement in safeguarding and service delivery.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the sustainability of social care, wellbeing and prevention services continues to present significant challenges for the Council. Part 8 of the SSWBA requires the Head of Paid Service and the Director of Social Services to ensure Elected Members receive clear advice on the resources required to effectively deliver social services functions.
- 8.2 Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services reported an underspend of £1.736 million against a net budget of £113.134 million in 2025-26. However, this position was largely achieved through the maximisation of grant funding, including the Children and Communities Grant, Housing Support Grant and Pathways of Care Grant. Without this additional funding, Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services budgets would have reported an overspend of £137,000.
- 8.3 The Directorate remains reliant on external grant funding to support service delivery, presenting an ongoing financial risk should funding levels reduce or cease in future years. Driven by increasing demand, higher levels of need and the complexity of care required, the report highlights continued financial pressures across social care services, particularly in:
- children's residential placements.
 - learning disability and mental health services.
 - physical disability and sensory impairment services.
 - older people's services.
- 8.4 To support the Directorate in managing these ongoing pressures, Council approved £6.6 million of budget growth for 2026-27 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2029-30, including funding for commissioned care contracts,

children's residential placements, learning disability transitions, adult social care pressures and supported accommodation services.

- 8.5 The Social Services Improvement Board continues to oversee actions to address service and financial pressures, including the acceleration of transformation activity within Adult Social Care.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee scrutinises the content of the draft 2025-26 Social Services Annual Report and provides feedback to be considered in preparation for the report being presented to Council on 23rd September 2026.

Background documents

None

**BRIDGEND COUNTY
BROUGH COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF
SIROL PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR**

Social Services

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26



Contents

1.	Director's Summary	3
2.	Context	6
	• Leadership	6
	• Workforce	12
	• Financial Resources	17
3.	Performance Assessment	18
	• People	19
	• Prevention	33
	• Partnership & Integration	52
	• Wellbeing	62
4.	Other Information	72
	• Inspections and Reviews	72
	• Complaints and Representations	75
	• Other Sources of Information	77
5.	Glossary	77

1

DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY

This is my 6th annual report as statutory director of social services in Bridgend county borough and my 11th annual report as a director of social services in a Welsh local authority. The report advises on the effectiveness of social services and wellbeing in Bridgend county borough, celebrates where we are doing well and highlights areas of improvement. Its purpose is to ensure that our strengths, of which there many are understood, and that risks and issues are clearly articulated so they can be managed and mitigated.

The annual report is an opportunity to thank our workforce for their tireless dedication and compassion in supporting our most vulnerable residents. It is a privilege to work with people often in the most challenging times of their lives. This work is too often unseen and unheralded. Yet for those supported by the social care workforce and wellbeing workforce, there is no more important public service. I am inspired every day by the way our frontline staff go above and beyond to make life better for the people they support. This report also gives a voice to people with care and support needs – how they live well and with purpose with disabilities, mental ill health, frailty and care experience.

Social services and wellbeing is an exemplar of good public service, embedded at the heart of local government. Our population is growing and ageing. Often words like 'crisis' are used in the public description of social care. It's important to challenge this prevailing narrative. In Bridgend, as in the rest of Wales, our registered social care services, provided by or commissioned by the Council, are publicly rated by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as overwhelmingly good and in some cases excellent. People do not wait long for assessments or to access services if needed. There is a strong preventative offer for children and families and adults and carers. We have well established models of social work practice

which are strength based and focussed on relationships. Performance is, for the most part, in the top quartile in Wales. Our workforce feels well supported by their managers and the Council and motivated and the majority would recommend working in social care in Bridgend.

There is always more to do. In the last year we have further embedded our quality assurance systems, ensuring we are focussing on qualitative as well as quantitative performance, and learning from people's experiences. Our quality assurance shows there is still some variability in how well we practice, particularly how well people's individual outcomes are recorded.

We have made good progress in reducing reliance on agency social workers and strengthening permanent staffing. In Children and Family Services, agency social worker numbers have fallen significantly since 2023, while staff retention has improved. Adult Social Care has also increased the proportion of permanent social workers. These changes have had a direct impact on the quality of what we do. Greater workforce stability improves continuity for people who use services and lowers some of the costs associated with agency staffing. Workforce wellbeing remains an important area of focus. Sickness absence remains higher than desired, with stress, anxiety and depression identified as the main reasons for absence. Recruitment, retention, wellbeing and workforce development therefore remain priorities.

Whilst the majority of our workforce feels well supported to do their jobs, there are areas where morale is lower and retention and recruitment continues to require a keen focus. We have invested significantly in 'growing our own' workforce and succession planning has been successful in recruiting into management positions. It's important that new staff and new managers feel well supported as they develop in their roles and grow in experience. It is also important that our workforce have the tools to do their jobs – a new digital case management system is being implemented. This is a high risk project given the sensitivity of the data being transferred between systems and a cause of frustration for workforce as all but the most urgent developments on the current system have been put on hold. The workforce are also anticipating the benefits of using artificial intelligence in their work with projects that will be progressed in 2026-27, to reduce bureaucracy and mean they can spend more time with the people they support.

2025-26 also saw very high levels of contacts with Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care. The investment in prevention and early intervention for children and families has meant that despite increased levels of contacts, less children have been supported in statutory care and support and in child protection and we have seen a steady but safe reduction in the number of care experienced children. This is excellent news as it means more families are being supported through early help and support services to remain together. We recognised a particular pressure with the support for teenagers and to address this have developed the Adolescent Crisis Team (ACT) to work intensively with children and families.

In Adult Social Care, the increase in contacts has translated into more adults requiring care and support plans and an increase in the number receiving care and support and care at home. The population is ageing and growing and whilst Bridgend residents' access proportionately less care home placements and hours of domiciliary care than elsewhere

in Wales, the increases in 2025-26 were higher than the demographic increase, which illustrates the pressure in the social care and health systems locally. The longstanding integrated multi-disciplinary community teams continue to represent exemplary practice, however, there is more work required to understand the need for community beds which places more pressure on community services. There is a well-developed preventative offer for adults in Bridgend through our partnerships with BAVO, Halo and Awen, assistive technology, falls prevention, community connectors and our reablement service. We recognise that preventative services could be better co-ordinated and this will be a focus for 2026-27.

Despite the decrease in the number of care experienced children, there continues to be pressure for residential care placements. This is in part due to a paucity of Bridgend foster carers and also in part due to the remodelling of the children's social care market as implementation of the milestones in the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act (2025) progress towards the removal of profit from children's social care in Wales. In response, we have taken steps to increase local capacity and reduce reliance on external providers. Two new children's homes were secured during the year, with one expected to open in summer 2026 and the other in early 2027. The Council also continued to strengthen fostering services and provide practical and therapeutic support for placements through the Placement Support Team. These actions are intended to improve stability for children, reduce disruption and keep more children supported locally. There are early signs that this approach is having an effect. There have been no circumstances where the Council has had to support a child in a placement operating without registration since November 2025 which is excellent progress. The priority for 2026–27 is to build on this progress by increasing local placement capacity, improving placement stability and strengthening support for foster carers and families.

Financial pressures remain significant. Whilst there was an underspent position at the end of 2025-26, this was largely due to short term grant funding. The number of people receiving social care and support has increased. We have responded through our 3 year plans for sustainable care and support, prevention and early intervention and wider transformation and service redesign. Our focus continues to be on workforce stability, strength based practice, prevention and early intervention, and outcome focussed services. We also emphasise the importance of strong and effective partnerships – with health, education, police, third sector, leisure and cultural partners and social care providers. We recognise the pressures that other partners face and that working together delivers better, more seamless outcomes for people, and is also more cost effective as people get the right support from the right professional more quickly. This is particularly evident in our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and integrated adult social care teams.

The Council approved additional budget pressures of £6.6 million for 2026–27. This supports continued investment in the real living wage for care workers and areas where need has been evidentially increasing for some time such as children's placements and learning disability services. The more recent increase in pressures in services for adults with long term disabilities and age related frailty requires close monitoring and oversight to understand what needs can be met more preventatively and the longer term financial implications of the growing and ageing population. We are also seeing more adults with long term health conditions stepping down from health settings, which is the right thing for them but is not accompanied by a corresponding transfer of funding. The overarching financial challenge is to achieve sustainable services without compromising timeliness, quality or outcomes. This makes prevention, early intervention, strength based practice workforce

stability, effective commissioning and service redesign increasingly important. The Council's overall digital transformation will also bring opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness which need to be harnessed.

The overall picture for 2025–26 is one of positive progress, balanced by significant levels of need which is translating into pressure in parts of our system. We have strengthened our workforce, improved practice and developed innovative services. CIW inspections and internal assurance also provide evidence of a culture of continuous improvement. Despite the challenges, this report is optimistic. We have the best workforce and strong partnerships, which we will continue to nurture and invest time in. Relationships are fundamental to the quality of our social services and wellbeing in Bridgend. They will be central to the next phase of our transformation – as we focus on achieving excellence and sustainability across all service areas.

I would like to end this introduction by again thanking our social care workforce and paying tribute to people with care and support needs. It is a privilege to be your director and to have the opportunity to elevate your experiences in this report.

Diolch o galon,

Claire Marchant

Corporate Director of
Social Services and Wellbeing

JULY 2026

2

CONTEXT

What do we do?

Social Services and Wellbeing support children, families, adults and carers who need information, advice or assistance, care, support or safeguarding. We work in partnership with the third sector, **Halo Leisure** and the **Awen Cultural Trust** to help people stay healthy, active and connected. All services work with partners and local communities to improve wellbeing and keep people safe.

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
 Service Provision in
 Secure Estates

- Caswell Clinic
- HMP Parc

PREVENTION AND WELLBEING

Early Intervention
 & Prevention
 Active 4 Life
 Discovery Days
 BAVO Partnership

- Building Community Resilience

Community Engagement
 Aging Well
 Carer / Young Carer Support
 Community Hubs
 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
- Feel Good 4 Life
- Carers Respite

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 children and adults, along with their families and carers, to support them to live safely and live well. We often work in challenging situations, supporting people whose needs arise from age related frailty, disability, mental ill health, poverty, or the risk of neglect or abuse.

As of 31st March 2026, we were supporting **911 children and young people** in statutory children's services, a 10% decrease compared with 31st March 2025. We were supporting **2,126 adults** during the same period, representing a 8% increase from the previous year.

The tables below show how many people are currently receiving ongoing, managed care and support. This does **not** include people who are still being assessed and do not yet have a care plan.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Number of Children & Young People Supported as at 31st March 2026 *

Change from 31st March 2025

Care and Support	507	-102
Child Protection	91	+17
Care Experienced Children	316	-17

* These figures include 236 children with a disability and 99 care leavers. A child or young person can be in more than one category.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Number of People Supported as at 31st March 2026 **

Change from 31st March 2025

Early Intervention & Prevention Hub	50	-22
Network Adult Social Work Teams	1462	+152
Older People Mental Health Team	70	+8
Hospital Team	33	NO CHANGE
Learning Disability	353	+6
Mental Health	146	-13
Secure Estates	12	+1

** All 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 significant numbers of children and families, adults and carers preventatively which means that despite our growing and ageing population we are able to effectively meet needs.



Planning for Future Need

Planning sustainable social care and wellbeing services requires a clear understanding of both current and future population needs. Population projections for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region as set out in the Population Needs Assessment 2022-2027 indicated that whilst the total population is expected to increase by 3% over the next ten years and 5% over the next twenty years, the most significant growth will be amongst older people, particularly those aged 85 years and over.

At the same time, the working-age population is expected to decrease. These demographic changes will increase demand for community support, accommodation-based services, dementia services, integrated care and support for unpaid carers if we continue to operate as we currently do. We also know that with the development of the new special school to replace Heronsbridge that more families with children with significant disabilities may move to Bridgend so they can benefit from the excellent provision. This will impact on the need for Children and Family Services, and over time Adult Social Care services.

Bridgend's population is already becoming older. Between 2011 and 2021, the population increased by 5%, the proportion of residents aged 65-74 increased from 10% to 11%, and those aged 75-84 increased from 6% to 7%. The number of residents aged 50-64 increased by 13%, whilst the proportion of people aged 35-49 decreased. These trends are significant because as we age we are more likely to require wellbeing and social care support.

Increasing Demand and Complexity

Demand for social care services increased during 2025-26. Adult Social Care received 6,610 contacts, a 6% increase compared with the previous year. The number of adults with a care support plan as at 31st March 2026 increased by 8% to 2,126 people, whilst the number of adults supported by Adult Social Work Teams increased by 13%, rising from 1,388 to 1,565 people.

There is also increasing complexity of need. The proportion of adult assessments leading to a care and support plan increased from 16% to 22%, suggesting that the people contacting us require more support. In Children and Family Services, contacts increased by 15%, rising from 14,828 to 16,994 during the year. Whilst child protection activity increased, with the number of children subject to child protection plans increasing by 21%, from 75 to 91 children as at 31 March 2026, this still represents a significant decrease from previous years. The number of children supported through care and support plans and care experienced children fell.

The Importance of Prevention

To respond to increasing need we prioritise prevention and early intervention. Evidence suggests that this approach is helping people receive support earlier and reducing unnecessary escalation into statutory services.

Whilst adult contacts increased by 6%, completed adult assessments increased by only 2% during the same period, indicating that more people are being supported through information, advice, assistance and community-based services. Within Children and Family Services, although overall contacts increased by 15%, the proportion progressing to statutory assessment reduced from 8% to 7%, reflecting improved screening arrangements and stronger preventative services.

Local Community Coordinators supported 797 adults during the year, a 32% increase from 606 people the previous year. Preventative support for children and young people also increased substantially, from 140 to 310 children / young people representing an increase of over 120%. These services play a vital role in helping people remain independent and connected within their communities.

Sustainable Social Services

Our commissioning strategies inform future service development. During the year, housing and accommodation reviews identified the need for a fourth Extra Care housing scheme within the county borough. Children and Family Services also progressed plans to expand local residential provision, with two additional children's homes progressed and further developments being considered.

Progress has also been made in strengthening local fostering capacity and developing supported living opportunities. These developments aim to reduce reliance on external placements and ensure that more children can remain close to their families, communities and support networks.

Supporting Our Carers

We know that unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting health and social care systems. Bridgend currently has an estimated 17,000 unpaid carers, although only around 2,100 are known to services.

The Population Needs Assessment projects that the number of carers aged 65 and over could increase by almost 50% by 2035. This highlights the importance of identifying carers earlier, increasing access to support and strengthening services to help carers maintain their own health and wellbeing. We have improved the way we listen to, and act on what carers are telling us in the last year and have seen an increase in the number of carers taking up the offer of a carers assessment.

Looking Ahead

Sustainability will depend on continuing to balance growing need with available resources by being focussed on our prevention and early intervention offer. We will strengthen our front door arrangements so it is easier to access advice and information.

Our practice will continue to be strength based and outcome focussed. Our commissioning and service planning activity will focus on prevention, community resilience, workforce support, accommodation development, digital transformation and integrated working with health and other regional partners. By using population intelligence and evidence-based commissioning, we aim to ensure that social care and wellbeing services remain sustainable, affordable and able to meet the changing needs of Bridgend residents in the years ahead.

2025-26: The year in summary

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

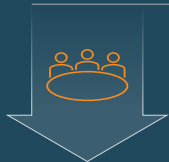


15% INCREASE

16994 contacts received in the year



1172 contacts provided with advice or assistance



9% DECREASE

632 section child protection enquiries held



23% DECREASE

1207 new care and support assessments completed in the year



35

64% DECREASE

in the number of young carers needs assessments completed in the year



1% INCREASE

275 new care and support assessments that progressed to a care and support plan



911

10% DECREASE

in the number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March



316

5% DECREASE

in the number of care experienced children at 31st March



91

21% INCREASE

in the number of children on the child protection register at 31st March

ADULT SOCIAL CARE



6% INCREASE

6610 contacts received in the year



3% INCREASE

2624 contacts provided with advice and assistance



2% INCREASE

2546 new care and support assessments completed in the year



215

41% INCREASE

in the number of carers needs assessments for adults completed in the year



7% INCREASE

566 new care and support assessments progressed to a care and support plan



2126

8% INCREASE

in the number of adults in receipt of homecare as at 31st March



869

15% INCREASE

in the number of adults in receipt of homecare as at 31st March



519

5% INCREASE

in the number of adults supported in residential or nursing care at 31st March

Corporate Management Team

In 2025-26, the Council entered its third year of ‘**Delivering Together Our Corporate Plan 2023-28**’ which explains the priorities and how we will work with partners and local people to deliver services.

The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) is led by the Chief Executive and includes the Corporate Directors and Chief Officers. The Corporate Director, Social Services & Wellbeing fulfils their responsibilities under [part 8 of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) by acting as the CMT lead responsible for ensuring the local authority effectively discharges its statutory care and safeguarding functions.



Political Leadership

The Council has 51 Councillors who are elected every five years by the community. They represent the people of Bridgend County Borough (BCBC) and set the overall Council strategy and budget.

The Council's Cabinet has 8 members: the Council Leader and 7 portfolio holders. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing is responsible for adult and children's social services, and health and wellbeing services across the borough.

Governance & Accountability

The Council's Scrutiny Committees meet at least four times a year to review performance, budgets and changes to services, and make recommendations on future policy and service improvements.

The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting Committee, chaired by the Deputy Leader, meets quarterly to make decisions about services for care experienced children and care leavers.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing is part of the Council's senior management team and regularly meets with Cabinet and other senior managers to review progress against the Council's priorities. This helps make sure the directorate's work supports the Council's overall aims.

The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate reviews performance, quality and management information every month across teams and services. More detailed reviews at a group manager level take place every quarter to make sure services are performing well, meeting targets and delivering the priorities in the Council's plans.

Workforce

Recruitment & Retention

A values-driven, well-motivated, highly supported, and well trained workforce is essential for delivering quality services and achieving positive outcomes for the people we support. Therefore, improving workforce wellbeing, retention and recruitment is a key priority.

SERVICE AREA	31st March 2025		31st March 2026	
	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount
Adult Social Care	571.39	734	583.76	743
Children and Family Services	352.43	405	369.02	416
Prevention and Wellbeing	25.73	30	26.11	62
Business Strategy, Commissioning, Performance and Improvement	72.74	77	77.66	84
Commissioning	9.62	10	9.81	10
Total	1031.91	1256	1066.36	1326

We have continued to improve our workforce position, some key achievements were highlighted in the CIW improvement check of Children and Family Services in June 2025.

The number of agency social workers has reduced significantly across the directorate. In Children and Family Services agency social worker numbers have fallen by 86% since May 2023, from 77 to 11, while agency use in residential services has reduced by 40% over the past year. Staff retention has also improved from 81% to 86% and has remained strong. In Adult Social Care, between July 2024 and March 2026, the proportion of agency social workers reduced from 13% to 10% of the workforce, while permanent staffing levels increased from 77% to 89%, demonstrating a stronger and more stable workforce across both services.

Overall, there have been fewer incidences of absence due to sickness compared to last year, and most teams have seen improvements. However, sickness absence is still too high. Workforce wellbeing and staff support is a major focus. The highest reason people are off work is stress, anxiety, or depression that is not caused by work. To improve staff wellbeing, we've promoted flexible working and targeted health and wellbeing initiatives and encouraged both individual and team wellbeing activities. We also work closely with Human Resources to manage sickness absence effectively and make sure staff are well supported.



Learning and Development

Bridgend Social Care Academi provides learning and development opportunities for local authority and Bridgend care provider staff, foster carers, carers and volunteers. Training is delivered through a mix of e-learning and face-to-face sessions, helping people complete the required training while accessing practical support.

We have expanded the use of Padlet, a digital platform where staff can access and revisit training resources. Dedicated Padlet pages are available for key topics including practice models, safeguarding, supervision skills, children's residential care and social work.

In 2025-26, the Social Care Workforce Development Team delivered training to 2,336 staff from statutory agencies and 930 staff from independent and third sector providers.

Growing Our Own

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS

We worked with Employability Bridgend to deliver a two week "Pathways to Care" programme, providing accredited training in medication administration, safeguarding and first aid. Participants also heard from people who receive care and from social care staff working in Bridgend.

We work closely with local secondary schools and Bridgend College to promote careers in social care. This has generated interest in the Council's apprenticeship programme. There are now three social care apprentices who have started with the Council this year.

This year, we also partnered with ELITE, a supported employment project involving the Princess of Wales Hospital and Bridgend College. Two students completed work placements and subsequently secured jobs in BCBC.

Supported internships provide people with learning disabilities with valuable work experience, helping improve employment opportunities and support workforce inclusion. Two interns who completed placements in a Council residential care home through a previous programme have since secured permanent employment with the Council. The first BCBC employed supported interns will be commencing in Autumn 2026.

DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS

Our Social Services Practitioner programme supports existing social care staff to gain qualifications and progress their careers, including progressing to a social work degree. The programme is a route into the Open University (Wales) Social Work degree, and four students completing the programme in summer 2026 will begin the degree in September 2026.

We have also seconded staff and hosted social work students from Bridgend College, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff University and the Open University. These staff and students act as ambassadors for the Council, with many new recruits citing their positive experiences as a factor in applying for roles in Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services.

Plans are in place to celebrate eight social work students graduating in 2026. All have secured jobs with BCBC.



Staff Feedback

We asked our staff to complete a survey so we could understand their views and experiences over the past year. This is what they told us:

KEY STRENGTHS

- 94%** know how to access support if needed
- 92%** understand what is expected in their role
- 91%** can access relevant training
- 90%** Agree or agreed to a certain extent that they can easily access training relevant to their post
- 87%** would recommend Social Care in Bridgend as a place to work

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 78%** have opportunities to contribute to decisions within their teams
- 72%** feel valued at work
- 69%** have the right tools and support to undertake role
- 56%** have the right opportunities available to progress their career

Survey results are similar to last year, with improvements in the numbers of staff feeling supported, valued, and positive about working for the Council. Staff continue to report strong management and colleague support, while career progression, access to tools and resources and, in some teams, morale are areas for improvement.



What Next?

To support more people to enter, develop and progress in social care careers, we continue to develop career pathways training, learning and development opportunities.

CREATING MORE ROUTES INTO CARE CAREERS

We will continue to support people to begin careers in social care through apprenticeships, work experience and partnerships with schools, colleges, universities and supported employment agencies. In 2026, apprenticeship opportunities will expand into Children's Residential Care.

SUPPORTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

We will introduce a new pathway for care and support staff who are interested in becoming social workers. Staff will be supported to complete the first stage of the Open University (Wales) Social Work degree, helping them gain the academic knowledge, skills and experience needed to explore a future career in social work.

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CARE

As children's residential services grow, we will invest in our workforce through tailored induction programmes, a clear training plan, qualifications and ongoing professional development opportunities.

IMPROVING CARE AND SUPPORT

Following a successful pilot, a new strengths-based approach to risk assessment will be introduced across services during 2026–27. This will support staff to focus on people's strengths and promote positive outcomes while managing risks safely.

SUPPORTING STAFF WELLBEING

We will prioritise wellbeing, providing more resources and opportunities for team development, wellbeing activities to support a healthy and resilient workforce.

SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS

From September 2026, the Council will employ our first supported interns through a programme for up to 12 young people with learning disabilities. The programme will provide work placements and help participants develop the skills, experience and confidence needed to move into employment.



Celebrating Our Workforce

EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Outstanding academic achievement: One MSc in Social Work trainee at Cardiff University achieved the **highest dissertation mark in their cohort**.

Peer recognition: Another MSc trainee was voted by fellow students as the person they would most like to have as their own social worker.

Excellent degree outcomes: Four seconded staff members achieved First Class Honours in the BSc (Hons) in Social Work at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Student success: A hosted student successfully completed the BSc (Hons) in Social Work programme.



SOCIAL CARE WALES ACCOLADES 2026

LEARNER OF THE YEAR

To find out why Catherine won the award click [here](#)

SUMMER 2025 GRADUATES WITH STAFF FROM BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AND BRIDGEND COLLEGE



ADULT SOCIAL CARE CELEBRATION EVENT

17th MARCH 2026: CELEBRATING WORD SOCIAL WORK DAY





Financial Resources

The net budget for Adult and Children's Social Care for 2025-26 was £113.134 million and the actual outturn was £111.398 million resulting in an underspend of £1.736 million

SSWB	2025-26 Expenditure Budget £'000	2025-26 Income Budget £'000	2025-26 Net Spend Budget £'000	2025-26 Actual Outturn £'000	2025-26 Variance £'000
Older People (aged 65 and over)	48,221	(13,641)	34,580	34,266	(314)
Adults (aged under 65)	57,464	(12,970)	44,494	43,563	(931)
Childrens and Families Services	35,307	(1,247)	34,060	33,569	(491)
Total	140,992	(27,858)	113,134	111,398	(1,736)

While the Directorate reported an underspend of £1.736 million the main reason for the under spend was maximisation of grants across the service including Children and Communities Grant (CCG) (£608,000), Housing Support Grant (HSG) (£539,000) and Pathways of Care Grant (£726,000). Without this additional funding, the directorate would have overspent by £137,000.

There continues to be pressures in budgets for children's residential placements and physical disability/sensory impairment and older person's services driven by the complexity of need and levels of demand across these services.

The Social Services Improvement Board is overseeing a number of actions to address the pressure in the Adult Social Care budget, including accelerating the work to transform learning disabilities. It is clear that pressures are becoming

more acute in Adult Social Care with an increase in the numbers of people receiving social care services – care and support and residential – has increased.

To support the Directorate in addressing these ongoing pressures, on 25th February 2026, Council approved £6.6 million in budget pressures for 2026-27 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2029-30. These included £3.000 million towards the implications of Real Living Wage uplifts on commissioned contracts, £1.498 million Childrens Services Residential Homes, £800,000 Transition Learning Disabilities Residential, £250,000 Adult Social Care residential pressures, £250,000 for Children's Supported Accommodation, £200,000 Accommodation Unit, £183,000 Community Sports Development and £151,000 Transition Independent Domiciliary Care.

3

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

This assessment covers both children and family services and adult services. It explains what the local authority has done during the year to meet the quality standards in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

Each section is divided into three parts: Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care, and, where work has been done across the whole Social Services and Wellbeing directorate, a section called “Across Social Services and Wellbeing”.

At the end of each of the four sections, you will also find our priorities for 2026–27.





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, Choice and Control

Listening to and involving people is central to everything we do. People’s experiences help us understand what we’re doing well and where we can improve.

Strengthening Voice Through Advocacy

Advocacy helps people have their voice heard about the care and support they receive, ensuring their views and wishes are listened to and acted on. It is important that everyone who uses our services knows that this support is available. Making people aware of advocacy is known as the “active offer”.

	2024-25	2025-26
Number of 'Active Offers' of advocacy for children during the year	54	31
Of which, number of children where an Independent Professional Advocate was provided	39	24
Number of adults where the need for an Independent Professional Advocate was identified	102	101
Of which, number of adults where an Independent Advocate was provided	67	43

In 2025–26, 101 adults were identified as needing an Independent Professional Advocate (IPA), with 43 receiving support (42%). Bridgend has a Hub and Spoke model to ensure people are directed to the right advocacy service. A review was undertaken and identified improvements which freed up capacity. This is helping to reduce waiting lists.

In Children and Family Services, advocacy uptake has decreased. The Corporate Parenting Board has acted on feedback from care experienced young people and continues to work with Tros Gynnal Plant to promote access to advocacy. Youth forum membership has increased, strengthening young people’s voice in shaping services. The Board is taking forward work on what it means for care experience to be recognised by the Council as a protected characteristic.



Direct Payments: Choice & Control

Direct Payments enable people to manage a personal budget to arrange their own care and support, giving them more choice, control and independence. They decide who supports them, when, and how their needs are met.



As of 31st March 2026, 403 people were receiving a direct payment, the same number as the previous year. The number of adults receiving a direct payment increased from 244 to 253, while the number of children and young people receiving a direct payment decreased from 159 to 150.

Learning from Experience

We use the “Most Significant Change” (MSC) approach and “Magic Moments, Tragic Moments” (MMTM) to hear people’s stories and improve practice.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

What life was like before: Parent A approached the Local Authority for support during the diagnosis journey for their son of a Pathological Avoidance Disorder. They approached Early Help and the Children’s Disability Team for support but were unsatisfied with the advice and guidance received.

What it is like following the change or experience?: Parent A was initially frustrated with the service responses which led to an informal complaint. Through improved communication they feel more confident advocating for themselves and their son.

Of all the experiences, what was the most significant?: Parent A now supports other parents in parent/carer groups and is actively involved in participation groups with other parents for Early Help service development.

Indicators of change:

- Enhanced parental confidence
- Improved advocacy skills for the self and others
- Participation evidence of service improvement and learning from real stories
- Improved practitioner connection building strategies for child engagement

MAGIC MOMENT, TRAGIC MOMENTS IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Magic Moment: Adult A was supported to improve their mobility and confidence through effective care and support planning and later returned to volunteer work at a local Men's Shed group.

Tragic Moment: Inconsistencies in Support at Home care scheduling caused initial frustration leading to an informal complaint, however it later prompted improvements in communication and care co-ordination.

Outcome: Adult A now lives independently and contributes to reflective learning and service improvement within Adult Social Care Integrated Network teams.

Indicators of change:

- Increased independence and community participation
- Improved consistency and communication in care delivery
- Reflective learning from positive and challenging experiences
- Stronger person-centred practice and accountability

Over the next year, we will continue to embed these frameworks. This will ensure people with lived experience have the time and space to share their experiences. Learning is used alongside workforce training, compliments and complaints, and through our Continuous Improvement Groups to support practice.

Working with Carers to Develop Support Networks

We have worked with Bridgend Carers Centre and other partners to improve support for people caring for loved ones with dementia. By listening to carers and understanding their needs, we have developed stronger local support networks, activities and opportunities that are welcoming and accessible for both carers and people living with dementia.

We know this work is making a difference from talking to carers, feedback from community sessions, and more people taking part in activities and wellbeing support. Carers have said they really value the chance to meet others, get advice and feel less alone.

During the year, partners ran Dementia Action Week events, family support sessions, community walks, and awareness activities across the area. There has also been good progress in improving how organisations work together in promoting

local dementia support services.

Next year, the focus will be on strengthening carer networks, making sure people know what support is available, reaching carers earlier, and offering more community based wellbeing activities.

Overall, this work has helped carers feel more connected, supported and informed, while also building stronger partnerships and more dementia friendly communities.

WHAT IS CARERS RESPITE?

Halo's Carers Respite Programme, in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council, provides unpaid carers the opportunity to improve their physical and mental wellbeing in a relaxed setting. Each programme is six-weeks long and takes place in-person. During the weekly two-hour sessions participants have the opportunity to connect with one another, share stories, learn to manage stress, receive professional nutrition information, learn about carers rights and supports, and engage in tailored physical activity.

This Programme gave me time to switch off mentally, which I haven't done for years. I felt less anxious and more emotionally balanced after attending the programme. It helped me reduce the constant feeling of overwhelm that comes with caring for my loved one.

I was able to rest properly and felt physically charged.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS



Sessions are provided free of charge.

145 hours of free replacement care provided last year.

FREE



MEMBER

Over 22 two-month Halo memberships have been given to encourage carers to use Halo facilities after the sessions have ended.

INCREASED ACTIVITY LEVELS, CONNECTIONS, AND QUALITY OF LIFE



By the end of six weeks, 95% of participants said they felt more connected to other carers.



99% of participants said they felt able to implement what they learned in the nutrition and relaxation sessions in their everyday lives.

100% of participants reported an improvement in their ability to manage their mental health and wellbeing (increase of 2.3 to 4.5 on a scale of 1-5), and knowledge of community supports (increase of 2.1 to 4.6 on a scale of 1-5).



By the end of the programme, 89% of participants said they were exercising four times a week or more.



LEARN MORE

Watch a video
about
programme.

Visit our
website.

Here is the link to Halo's Carer's respite programme [website](#).



Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

Providing staff with training on people's language, culture, and background helps them communicate more clearly, show respect, and tailor care to each individual. This makes people feel valued, understood, and safe, which in turn improves their overall experience and outcomes.

In Wales, this approach is supported by key government strategies and frameworks that guide organisations to deliver fair, person-centred care.

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan is a national framework set by the Welsh Government that Social Services and Wellbeing has committed to. It makes anti-racism a core value and aims to improve fairness and outcomes for communities. The Bridgend social care workforce is becoming increasingly diverse. We have reviewed where we are against the standard in the plan. The plan sets out actions to build anti-racism into everyday work, policies and services to help eliminate racism.

Our self-assessment will inform a detailed action plan with clear, measurable steps to track progress and focus on proven improvements. This will support national reporting through the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and ensure we meet the plan's goals by 2030.

Mwy Na Geiriau / More than Words

Mwy na Geiriau is Welsh Government's plan to make sure the Welsh language is an integral part of health and social care. We have updated our action plan to help staff develop their Welsh language skills and are focussing on ensuring managers and leaders take responsibility for supporting and promoting the use of Welsh.

The plan is closely linked with the Council's Equalities Team, Social Care Workforce Development Programme and Human Resources team. By working together, we have strengthened our partnerships, created a central list of staff who can speak Welsh, and reviewed the level of Welsh language skills needed for frontline roles.

Within Social Services and Wellbeing, 3 staff were enrolled on in-house Welsh language courses, and 34% of staff have declared some level of Welsh language skill.

Key Developments

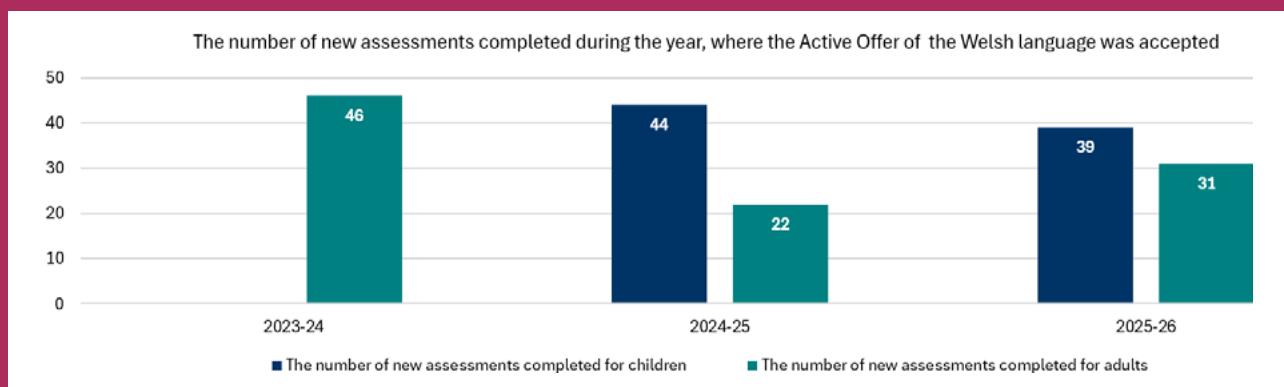
- The creation of an Active Offer factsheet to support delivery of Welsh language services.
- Ensuring the new case management information system can record individuals' language preferences.
- Identifying frontline social services staff who would benefit from Welsh language training.
- The promotion of Welsh language learning opportunities through staff coffee mornings.
- Raising awareness of "Welsh in the Workplace" through staff communications.
- Development of online resources to support understanding of the Welsh language and in social work.



In addition, we encourage Welsh speaking social work students to receive practice learning support in Welsh. Welsh Language Awareness training is mandatory for all staff, and we actively promote Welsh language training opportunities available through Social Care Wales.

The Active Offer

Mwy na Geiriau supports the Active Offer by making Welsh language services available as part of everyday care, without people having to ask.



In 2025–26, 39 children and 31 adults chose to receive services in Welsh. Adult uptake has increased since last year, showing growing demand for Welsh language services.

What Next?

- We will improve access to our register of Welsh speaking staff.
- Reissue our Active Offer guidance to help staff understand their responsibilities.
- Work in partnership with Human Resources, to further develop our workforce strategy, including exploring a minimum level of Welsh language skills for all social services staff.



Children and Family Services

Voice and Control

Voice, choice and control are central to Children and Family Services. We support this through a range of engagement activities that ensure children, families, and carers are listened to and actively involved in decisions about their care.

Below are key examples of engagement activity undertaken across Children and Family Services, including work with care experienced young people, supported by the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer.

Children & Family Services: Engagement Overview

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

We held three community events this year, with around 90 families taking part. These events gave children, young people and their families a chance to share their experiences, express their views, and help shape how our services develop in the future.

WILD ROOTS

Our Wild Roots programme uses outdoor activities to connect with young people, especially those who find it harder to engage in formal settings. It has helped us hear directly from them about their experiences and what support works best for them.

VOICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Across our service, we make sure to listen to and record the views of children, young people and families in our everyday work. This is a key part of how we operate and is reflected in our records, reviews and how we measure outcomes. We also use real life case studies and family stories to show the impact of our work, including in our recent Social Care Wales Accolades submission in which we were shortlisted for the finals.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE 11+ OFFER

In developing our 11+ Early Help service, we spoke with secondary school learners and heard from over 180 young people. Their feedback has given us valuable insight into the support they want and has helped shape how the service is being designed.

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

We collect feedback from children, young people and families after they've received support. This is helping us get a clearer and more consistent understanding of what families think about the service and where we can improve.

PARENTING CAFÉS

The Early Help service will lead on setting up Parenting Cafés, giving parents and carers a chance to share their views and help shape the support available in their local area.

Care Experienced Children & Young People: Engagement Overview

STATUTORY VISITS, REVIEWS & ADVOCACY

Children and young people in care are regularly given opportunities to share what they think, want, and feel during statutory visits and review meetings about their care. They can also get help from independent advocates, who support them in speaking up about specific concerns and making sure their views are listened to when decisions are made about their lives.

BRIDGEND YOUTH FORUM (BYF) PARTICIPATION

The Bridgend Youth Forum, run by TGP Cymru, gives young people in care and care leavers a clear way to share their ideas and help improve the services they use. By taking part, they help shape service and practice, get involved in recruitment and selection, attend national events, and support projects like creating online resources for young people. This helps make sure they have a real say in shaping services.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMIT (AUTUMN 2025)

The Young People's Summit was the first event of its kind in Bridgend where care experienced young people met professionals in one place. It created a safe and positive space to talk and build relationships. The event focused on four key themes: Your Voice, Your Future, Your Education, and Your Health, with dedicated workshops for young people to share their views, wishes, and feelings.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

Young people want to be listened to and understand why they are in care. They have hopes for the future but also worries. They value support in school but can feel pressured and unheard, especially when adults speak to carers instead of them.

IMPACT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Feedback gathered from these events is used to improve services and practice so they better meet young people's needs and are more inclusive and responsive. It will also help shape the priorities of Children and Family Services and the Corporate Parenting Board, supporting better planning and stronger partnerships with young people who have experience of care.

Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

Embedding the Signs of Safety Practice Model

Signs of safety focuses on building a detailed, balanced picture of family strengths and worries so that children's safety is assured through collaborative practical plans created with the family and their network.

Our Signs of Safety training programme provides comprehensive multi-agency training and development for staff and partners to ensure effective and consistent implementation of the practice model.

Signs of Stability and Signs of Wellbeing practice have been introduced across several teams, including the Care Experienced Children Team, Just Ask 15+, the Independent Reviewing Officer Service, and the Early Help and Children and

Family Support Service (CFSS). Core Signs of Safety training has continued, supporting new staff to learn the approach whilst giving existing staff the opportunity to refresh their knowledge. 80% of staff have now been trained in this practice model.

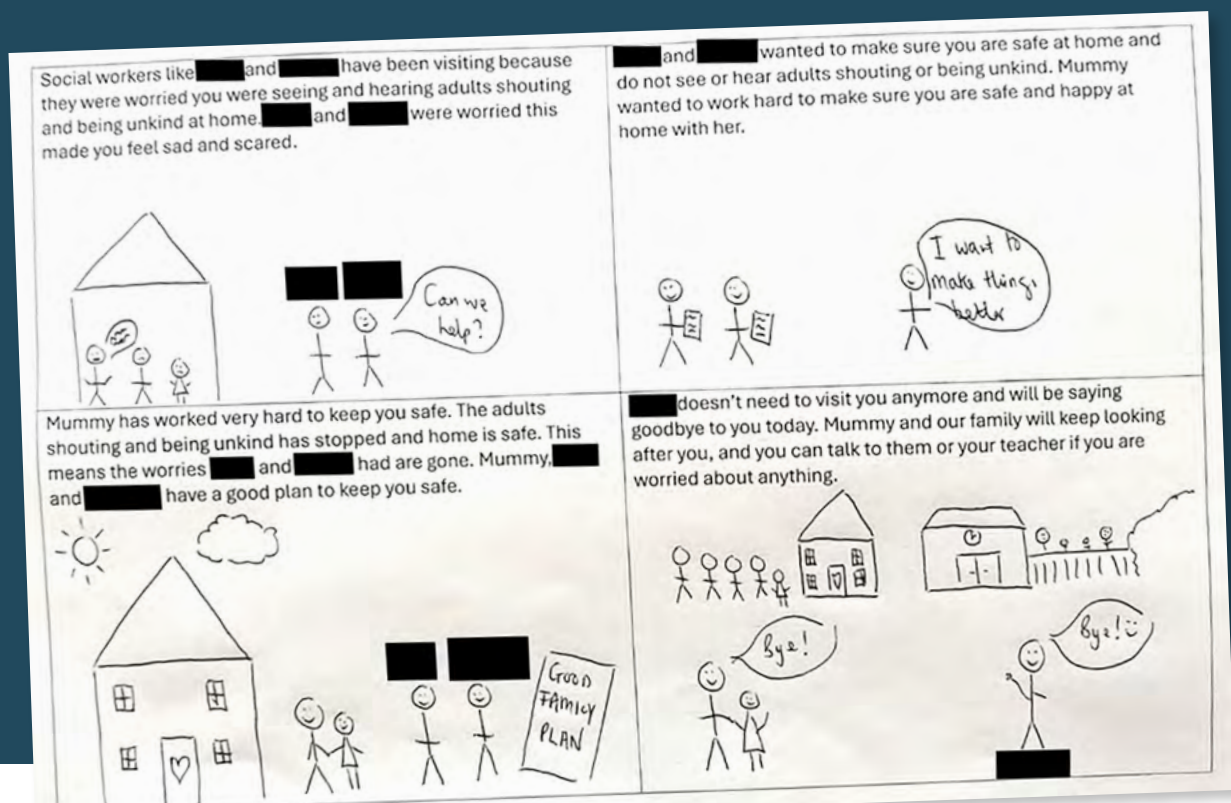
Quality assurance audits are used to help understand how effective the new model is and what results it is achieving.

CASE STUDY:

A SIGNS OF SAFETY APPROACH

This information here shows how words and pictures were used to help a child understand why social services became involved and what their role was in supporting the family.

The case had a positive outcome, with the mother working well with professionals and her support network. The social worker used the Signs of Safety approach, focusing on the family's strengths and practical solutions to help achieve positive changes.



Adult Social Care

Voice and Control

Voice, choice and control are also central to our Adult Social Care Services. We talk to people, actively listen and include them in decisions, so services fit what people need and care about most.

Here is a brief summary of established groups that work together to improve services across the borough:

Better Together Bridgend

Better Together Bridgend is a partnership that works to improve services and support for adults with learning disabilities in Bridgend county borough.

It brings together people with learning disabilities, families and carers, Bridgend County Borough Council, health services, support providers, housing organisations, voluntary sector groups, and regional partners to help shape services and drive positive change.

The partnership focuses on four key areas:

- Parent and Carer Forum
- Communication and Relationships
- NHS Health Profile
- Strategic Development



Supported by People First Bridgend, with a member of People First as chair, the partnership meets regularly to discuss what matters most to people with learning disabilities, including where they live, how they spend their time, and the support they receive.

Together, partners oversee a shared plan to improve services and outcomes for people with learning disabilities across Bridgend.

Having a Say Group

The Having a Say Group is now in its fourth year of meeting and continues to go from strength to strength.

It brings together people with learning disabilities who live in their own homes and are supported by Bridgend staff.

The meetings are always lively, creative and supportive. They are a safe space for sharing, learning, informing and supporting each other and the services that operate in the area.

It has grown into a group that not only helps people make friends and connect with others but also gives them a chance to share their views and influence the council's work.

Recently, members of the group went to a scrutiny meeting to talk about what matters most to them.



Plan-it Wel

During the year, a new group called Plan-it Wel (Work, Education and Leisure) was set up. It is an advisory and co-production group that works with council staff to explore and plan meaningful day opportunities for now and in the future.

The name of the group was decided by people with learning disabilities and reflects what is important to them. They have recently been involved in developing a questionnaire for people with a learning disability to ensure they have a voice, choice and control in how they spend their time now, and what they would like for the future. The group explores peoples hopes, dreams and aspirations and how, with support from the Council and partners, they can work towards fulfilling these.

The group has recently been involved in the development of the roles of Day Opportunity Mentors, a new role supporting individuals to move into meaningful occupation such as education, volunteering, supported employment and paid employment.



Evidence Based Review of Bridgend Resource Centre

A review of Bridgend Resource Centre and other day opportunities was carried out with people who use the services, staff and partners. A new approach has been developed with a focus on expanding opportunities, including paid employment, volunteering, work experience, education and training, community groups, and greater access to mainstream community opportunities. This gives people more choice, increase independence and help them achieve their personal goals.

Bridgend Resource Centre is now an assessment and transition service. 10 people are currently being supported to move into community based services that better meet their needs.

Work is also taking place with partners to make better use of local buildings and community spaces, creating a wider range of inclusive specialist and mainstream activities across daytime, evening and weekend services. People, families, carers and staff are helping shape these developments.



Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

Embedding the Strength-Based Outcome-Focussed Practice Model

Our practice model puts people's goals, capabilities and networks at the centre of assessment and support.

We ran strength-based practice training for the fourth year in a row. The two day course was aimed at new and newly qualified staff focussing on people's strengths, independence, choices and wellbeing, rather than just their needs or problems. Staff also learned how to have better conversations with people and families to support positive change.

While the approach is now well embedded in assessment and care management, it needs to be used more consistently in direct care services which will be a focus in 2026-27.

CASE STUDY:

STRENGTHS-BASED, OUTCOMES-FOCUSED PRACTICE

Adult B, aged 38, described how experiencing domestic abuse, trauma and substance misuse from an early age had a significant impact on their life.

"I was scared all the time. I'd snap instantly because that's all I knew."

As an adult, B experienced addiction, repeated periods in prison and fractured family relationships. Prior to receiving support, they described becoming increasingly isolated and withdrawn.

"I wouldn't leave my house except to walk my dog. I stayed in my bedroom for 15 years. I didn't care about myself before. I just let myself go."

Following a series of seizures, Adult B recognised they could no longer cope alone and sought support.

"I felt my body shutting down and I was like, 'Right, now is the point. I can't ignore this anymore'."

Practitioners took time to understand Adult B's experiences, strengths and what mattered most to them. Through strengths-based conversations,

they helped Adult B understand the impact of trauma, build on their own motivation to change and draw on support from family and wider networks. Support included detox, rehabilitation and ongoing therapeutic support.

Reflecting on this experience, Adult B said:

"The team built me up. It's mad that someone cares so much about someone they didn't know."

The outcomes that mattered most were improving wellbeing, rebuilding family relationships and living independently.

"My eyes are open. I'm just living my life now. It's an amazing feeling being off the drugs and reuniting with your family."

Outcome: By focusing on Adult B's strengths, resilience and aspirations, practitioners supported sustained recovery, improved wellbeing, stronger family relationships, increased independence and greater voice, choice and control over their future.

People: 2026-27 Key Priorities

ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Ensure that access to prevention and wellbeing services are co-ordinated so people get the right support from the right service at the right time.

Progressing long-term community wellbeing and leisure strategies to support sustainable, community-led services.

Continue to strengthen carers networks, improving awareness of support available, increasing engagement with carers, and acting on what carers tell us matters to them.

Ensure a consistent and impactful wellbeing offer to all our workforce.

Develop progression pathways so staff are able to see how they can progress their careers in Bridgend County Borough Council.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Ensure children know who their social worker is and are informed of any changes in a timely way.

Develop a Parent Advocacy Network that helps shape service delivery and improvement.

Increase the opportunities for children and young people to participate and guide the services we provide.

Embed the Most Significant Change and Signs of Safety practice model to ensure practice is consistently of a good quality standard.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Implement the Adult Social Care Workforce Plan which includes recruitment, retention, succession planning, leadership development and workforce wellbeing.

Ensure all service areas actively capture and respond to the voice of the person and carers.

Co-produce and implement a Carers Strategy, improving support, assessment, and outcomes for unpaid carers.

Ensure our Community Mental Health services are evidence based, resourced, and organised to meet need and prevent escalation of need.



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

We work with a range of trusted partners to support people to live well and prevent escalation of need.

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.

Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

Local Community Co-ordinators and Community Navigators

Preventative services help people get the right support earlier within their own communities. Community Navigators and Local Community Co-ordinators are an important part of this approach, working alongside third sector partners, community groups and other services.

Local Community Co-ordinators work directly with individuals and families to help them stay independent and prevent or delay the need for more formal care and support. They focus on people's strengths, skills and existing support from family, friends and their local community.

Community Navigators complement this work by helping people find and access local groups, activities, services and third sector support. They provide information, signposting and connections into community opportunities, supporting people to remain connected and build their own resilience.

Demand continues to grow significantly, with adults supported by Local Community Co-ordinators increasing by 32% (from 606 to 797) and children and young people supported increasing by 121% (from 140 to 310) between 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Going forward, the focus will be on strengthening how Local Community Co-ordinators, Community Navigators and other preventative services work together. This will include clearer roles and pathways and strengthened links with community and third sector organisations.

Overall, this approach helps people stay independent, connected and supported within their communities, while reducing or delaying the need for more formal care and support.



What Matters to our Carers?

A “what matters” conversation is about understanding what is important to each person. These conversations are as important for carers and young carers as they are for the people they look after. They focus on the carer as a person, not just their caring role, making sure their feelings, goals, and hopes are heard.

The Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service helps carers by connecting them to local help. The Council carries out carers’ assessments, while TuVida provides advice, support, and helps carers connect with local and community services.

We seek to understand what each carer needs and getting them the right help as soon as possible. This can include practical help, local groups, and activities to improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness. For young carers, wellbeing sessions give them a safe place to build confidence, make friends, and cope better with challenges.

This year, we have seen a 41% increase in carers’ assessments and have held a number of listening events to understand people’s experiences. We understand that for many carers, navigating the social care system has not been easy and that they have not always felt the Council listened to and acted on their concerns. We are working on a plan with them to address this. In addition, we have recruited a new worker to undertake assessments in Adult Social Care.

Supporting “*What Matters*” to Carers & Young Carers

OUR PARTNER TUVIDA:

- Supported **485** new referrals.
- and, signposted **5917** carers to wellbeing support.

THE COUNCIL:

- Supported **852** Young carers with wellbeing opportunities
- **35** assessments for young carers completed during the year.
- **215** assessments for carers of adults completed in the year.

NEXT STEPS::

- Build stronger support networks.
- Reach carers who are not yet known to services.
- Help carers access support earlier.
- Work more closely with partners to provide better, joined-up support.

Young Carers: *We Are Valued Days*

The We Are Valued Days have continued to provide an important opportunity for young carers to have time away from their caring responsibilities, enjoy themselves and spend time with other young people who understand some of the challenges they face.

During 2025-26, 136 young carers attended the We Are Valued Days, supported by local educational settings. Young carers were also encouraged to bring a buddy, helping the days feel welcoming and inclusive and enabling them to enjoy the experience alongside a friend.

The days provide a relaxed and supportive environment with a range of fun and wellbeing activities. Most importantly, they give young carers the opportunity to simply be young people – trying new activities, building friendships, developing confidence and having some valuable time for themselves.

The buddy approach has also helped increase understanding of the young carer role amongst their peers, while ensuring young carers do not feel different or singled out because of their caring responsibilities.

The We Are Valued Days form part of the wider support available through the Bridgend Young Carers Network, helping young carers feel recognised, connected and valued. They complement the wider wellbeing offer, including Young Carer Ambassadors, wellbeing sessions and the Young Carers ID Card.

Impact: The days are helping young carers build positive friendships, reduce isolation, improve confidence and wellbeing, and importantly provide time away from their caring role to focus on themselves and have fun.



Improving Transition Support for Young People with a Disability

Planning transition early for young people with a disability helps ensure that any changes in support happen gradually, so there are no gaps in care, healthcare, or education. We know for most children moving between Children into Adult services, this is a smooth process with continuity of support. However, we also recognise this is not the case for all families and there are areas for development. To support this, a rapid review of how transition support works was completed. This review made recommendations on how to improve support for children, young people, and their families as they move into adulthood.

The review found that improvements are needed in how transition is overseen, how decisions are made, having clearer processes, joint training for staff, and giving better information to children and families about the transition process. Addressing these findings is one of our priorities for 2026-27.



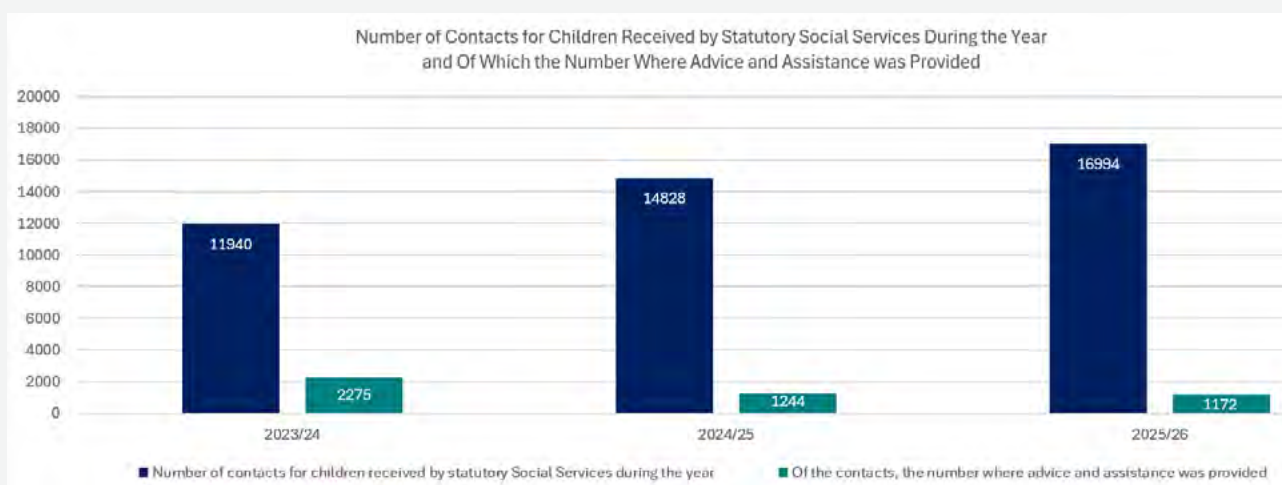


Children and Family Services

Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

Overview of Contact and Care & Support Needs

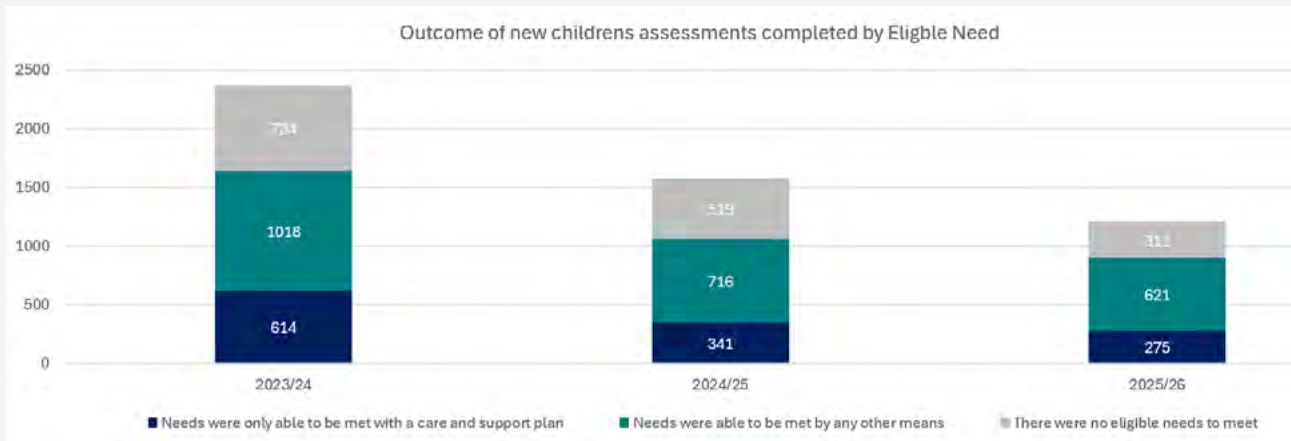
During 2025-26, Children and Family Services received 16,994 contacts, a 15% increase from 14,828 the previous year.



Despite higher numbers of contacts, the proportion progressing to statutory assessment fell from 8% to 7%, reflecting improved screening, decision-making and use of early help support services.

The police remained the highest referrer, consistent with previous years and highlights the importance of strong multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, 1,207 assessments for children and young people were completed, a 23% reduction from 1,576 in the previous year.



This decrease can be attributed in part to the implementation of the Signs of Safety practice framework, which supports earlier and more structured screening of referrals and helps ensure that only children requiring statutory intervention progress to assessment. Signs of Safety has also improved safety planning and decision making by focusing on understanding risks, family strengths, existing support networks, and what matters most to children and their families.

In addition, increased use of Early Help and partnership support may mean that many families' needs are being identified and addressed earlier, reducing the need for statutory assessment while ensuring appropriate support is provided.

Delivering Support for Families

In 2025–26, our Family Support Commissioning Strategy has helped create a clear, joined up approach to early help and prevention. Services now work more closely with frontline teams, with simpler and more consistent ways to make referrals, better oversight of support, and stronger links with safeguarding, Early Help and CFSS. This includes recommissioning parenting and disability support through Barnardo's and strengthening the support available for children with additional needs and their families and making improvements in how we manage direct payments.

Multi agency working has improved, leading to earlier, better co-ordinated support for children and families and less duplication, particularly for those with complex needs. Work with partners across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region has improved consistency and access to services, including support for emotional wellbeing, neurodiversity, pre birth and complex care.

The voice of children, young people and families are shaping services, highlighting the need for flexible, consistent and relationship based support. Investment in the workforce has supported these changes.

Early signs indicate that more families are being supported without the need for statutory intervention, despite increasing demand.

- Children and Family Services received 16,994 contacts in 2025-26, up 15% from 14,828 in 2024-25.
- The proportion of contacts progressing to a statutory assessment fell from 8% to 7%.
- This means a smaller proportion of families required statutory assessment, despite the increase in contacts.

**CASE STUDY:****GETTING THE RIGHT HELP
WHEN IT MATTERS**

A family with two children, one of whom had additional needs linked to neurodiversity, was referred for support due to increasing stress within the home, difficulties accessing appropriate services and concerns around family resilience. The parents reported feeling overwhelmed and unsure how to navigate support systems, which was beginning to impact on relationships within the family and the child's emotional wellbeing.

The family were supported through a co-ordinated multi-agency approach involving Early Help, commissioned parenting and disability support services, education and health professionals. A clear plan was developed with the family, focusing on what mattered most to them and identifying practical support that could reduce stress and improve day-to-day stability.

The family accessed targeted parenting support alongside community based provision, while professionals worked together to improve consistency and communication across services.

This ensured support was better aligned to the child's needs.

Over time, parents reported feeling more confident in managing challenges and better able to access the right support at the right time. Relationships within the home improved, school engagement stabilised and the family described feeling more listened to and involved in decision making. The case study highlighted the positive impact of integrated, working in supporting children with additional needs and preventing escalation into more intensive intervention.

Strengthening Fostering Provision and Local Growth

During 2025-26, we improved fostering services by increasing support for carers, improving placement stability and growing local fostering capacity. This supports the Council's aim of helping more children remain in stable family based care, close to their communities, schools and support networks.

A key development was the introduction of the Placement Support Team, which provides practical and therapeutic support to carers and children seven days a week. The team provides early support, helping to support foster families to continue caring. Support includes direct work with children, advice for carers and out-of-hours support. The service is also using referral trends and carer feedback to better understand pressures and improve support.



We worked with Foster Wales to strengthen local recruitment and raise awareness of fostering in Bridgend. Cabinet approved and promoted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for foster carers, kinship carers and Special Guardians, and progressed a No Detriment policy for kinship carers who become Special Guardians.

The number of approved foster carers remained stable at 63 in March 2026. There was a small increase in available fostering placements, reversing the previous decline in capacity. Carers also reported improvements in some areas of support, although consistency remains a priority.

Priorities for 2026-27 include further developing the Placement Support Team to address the issues that matter to foster carers, strengthening support and training for carers, improving placement stability, increasing local fostering capacity and progressing Step-Down Fostering, Support Care and an enhanced Parent and Child offer which diversify the offer in Bridgend.

Promoting Resilient Communities

Supporting independence and Keeping Families Together

Early Help and CFSS strengthened the offer during 2025–26, improving access to support, delivering strong outcomes for families, and helping more children remain safely at home through timely, targeted intervention.

An improved screening process made it easier for families to access support, enhanced joint working with partners, sped up decisions, reduced duplication, and strengthened support for children with disabilities and their families.

SCREENING TEAM

- 2,661 contacts received
- 2,242 assessments completed (84%)
- 42% of referrals directed to advice, community support or commissioned services rather than statutory intervention

EARLY HELP HUBS

- 380 referrals received since September 2025
- Most families supported without escalation
- No repeat referrals in the last six months

CFSS

- Supported 322 children at risk of entering care
- 94% remained safely at home

RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

- 86% of families remained out of care six months after support ended



We improved support for teenagers this year. The Adolescent Crisis Team and Safer Connections provided targeted support to young people experiencing family breakdown, exploitation and other crises.

Through the use of trauma informed based approaches, services helped to build family resilience, with feedback from families indicating that they felt listened to, understood and well supported throughout their involvement.

CASE STUDY:

ADOLESCENT CRISIS TEAM

A 15-year-old young person was referred to the Adolescent Crisis Team (ACT) following a significant breakdown in family relationships. Conflict at home had escalated, affecting their parent and two younger siblings, both aged under 10. There was an immediate risk that the young person would be unable to remain safely at home and could enter local authority care.

ACT responded immediately to help resolve and de-escalate the crisis. The team undertook intensive visits with the young person and their family, providing practical and emotional support. They helped the family understand what was contributing to the crisis and developed strategies to manage conflict, improve communication and maintain safety within the home.

ACT also co-ordinated support with the wider professional network to ensure everyone was

working towards a consistent plan.

As a result, the immediate crisis was de-escalated, family relationships improved, and the young person was able to remain safely at home. The family reported feeling listened to and better equipped to manage future difficulties. This prevented the situation from escalating further and reduced the likelihood of the young person entering care.

Key Priorities for 2026–27:

- Improve timeliness of screening and access to Early Help.
- Strengthen quality assurance.
- Embed consistent practice.
- Expand community-based support services

Supporting Children to Remain with their Families or Return Home Safely

There was positive progress in 2025-26 with our strategy to support more families to live together safely. There are fewer children in care, more children remaining safely with their families or returning home, and clearer, more consistent care plans.

- The number of children in care was 316 at March 2026, 17 fewer than the previous year, continuing a steady decline since 2023.
- 22 children returned home.
- Only 16% of children receiving statutory support required admission to care.
- More children are remaining safely with their families
- During the year, decision-making for children improved, successful returns home increased, and joint working across services strengthened.

Some children need additional support to meet their more complex needs. To address this, we will:

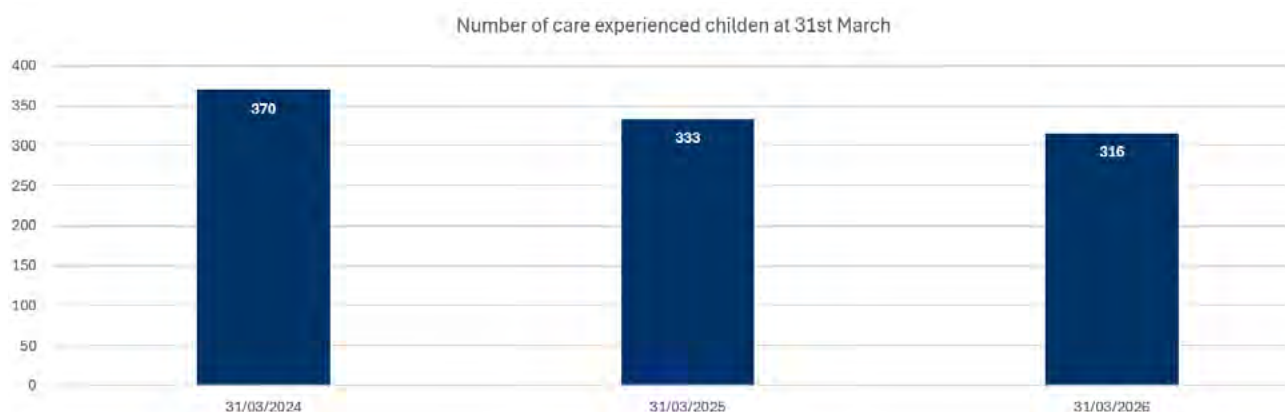
- Establish a specialist team using 'invest to save' Council investment to provide intensive support.
- Improve the use of short-term residential care as part of plans to support children to return home.
- Strengthen oversight of connected person care arrangements.
- Build staff confidence in managing more challenging situations.





Care Experienced Children

The number of Care Experienced Children (CEC) has reduced by 5% over the past year, from 333 to 316 children, a decrease of 17 children.



The reduction has been supported by stronger permanence planning, timely decision-making and effective multi-agency working, helping more children achieve stable outcomes.

Placement Commissioning Strategy, Children and Family Services 2025-2030

The Placement Commissioning Strategy, approved by Cabinet in March 2026, outlines how the Council will ensure sufficient suitable accommodation, care and support for care experienced children and young people. It aims to expand local options so children can remain connected to their families, schools and communities where possible, while also supporting safe family reunification when appropriate.

The strategy focuses on strengthening in-house services and not for profit options, improving stability and outcomes, increasing choice and removing reliance on for-profit placements in line with the [Health and Social Care \(Wales\) Act \(2025\)](#).

Operating Without Registration (OWR) arrangements reduced during the year. In 2024-

25, there were 5 children in 7 OWR placements, reducing to 4 children in 4 placements in 2025-26. No new OWR arrangements have started since November 2025.

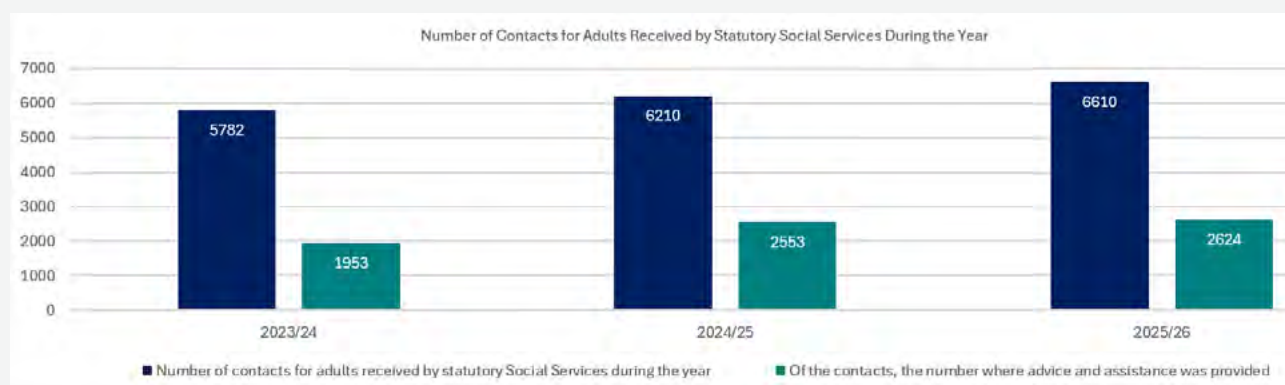
This is a positive trend, helping to ensure children and young people are cared for in regulated services that have been inspected and can provide safer, stable care.

Adult Social Care

Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

Overview of Contact and Care & Support Needs

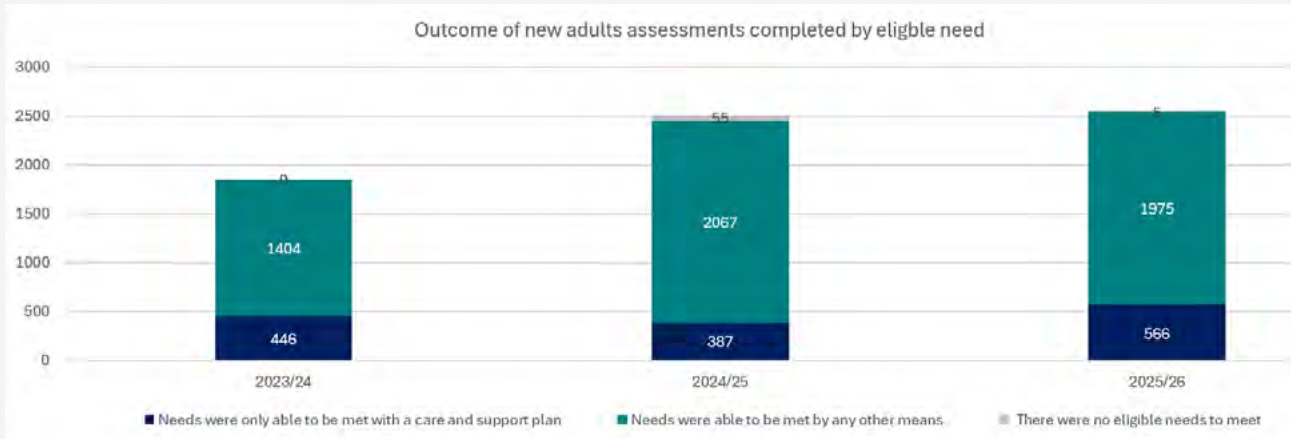
Contacts to Adult Social Care increased by 6%, in 2025-26, rising from 6,210 to 6,610. Health remain the main source of referrals, reflecting continued system pressures.



The proportion of contacts progressing to assessment has remained stable (40% compared to 41% last year). Whilst this demonstrates our ongoing focus providing early advice, information and preventative support the overall numbers of assessments have increased as contacts increased.

Most people do, however, receive the help they need at first contact without requiring a formal assessment, supporting our early intervention and prevention approach. We will be undertaking work to determine if we can support even more people preventatively.

Assessments increased by 2%, from 2,509 in 2024-25 to 2,546 in 2025-26. The increased numbers highlight the challenges of managing the needs of an ageing population and the pressures in the health and social care system.



The proportion of assessments leading to a care and support plan increased from 16% to 22% whilst more work is needed, this may reflect growing complexity of need.

Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC)

ARC is a key early intervention mental health service in Bridgend, providing accessible advice, guidance, and practical support to people experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties. The service supports Welsh Government priorities around prevention, early intervention, recovery, and reducing pressure on GPs and secondary mental health services.

ARC SERVICES 2025–26

- **578** Advice & Guidance contacts
- **152** Employment Support referrals
- Growing support for neurodiverse individuals
- Strong employment outcomes: **65 people remained in or returned to work**
- New direct pathways into Local Primary Mental Health Support Service (LPMHSS)

We are carrying out a joint review of the ARC service with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

This review will explore how the service model can be developed and improved. It will involve engagement with key stakeholders, most importantly people who use the service, and consider practical ways to make access to mental health support easier and more effective throughout the county borough.



Unpaid Carers Strategic Group

We have established a Carers Steering Group to improve our systems and processes and ensure that more unpaid carers are identified and offered an assessment. Each social work team now has a dedicated link worker to promote good practice and improve support for unpaid carers across services.

At our listening events earlier this year we clearly heard carers views. Using this feedback, we are developing an action plan and training programme. The action plan and guidance will be shared with carers to ensure they shape future improvements.

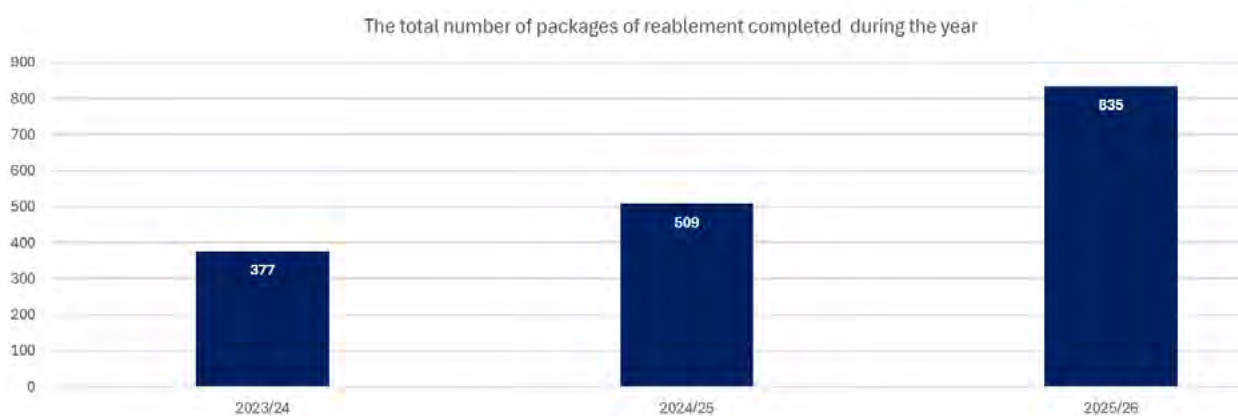
[Here](#) is a video from one of our listening events, bringing carers and professionals together. We want to make sure carers feel heard and valued.





Supporting Independence: Care and Support at Home

The Council's care and support at home service is a reablement service which helps people regain confidence and independence after illness, injury or a stay in hospital. It supports people to rebuild daily living skills so they can do more for themselves and reduce the need for ongoing care and support.



A total of 835 reablement packages were completed in 2025-26, representing a 121% increase over the past three years. This growth is a deliberate strategy as we aim to ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity to retain or regain independence. Reablement outcomes were:

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Reablement Packages that Mitigated the need for support	67%	56%	50%
Reablement Packages that Reduced the need for support	14%	17%	19%
% of Reablement packages that Maintained the need for the same level of support	14%	16%	20%
% of Reablement packages that neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support	5%	11%	11%

As the service continues to expand access to short-term reablement support, more residents are benefiting from interventions that help them remain as independent as possible. The service is part of our care and support at home service which delivers excellent person-centred care. We have also developed other initiatives through our integrated initiatives such as our 'bed to chair' project supported by multi-disciplinary teams so everyone has the opportunity to retain as much independence as possible.

CASE STUDY:

PROMOTING & SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE

Bed to Chair to Independence Hospital Avoidance and Prevention



A reablement approach, focused therapy and the right support at the right time helped Charles regain his independence.



Charles (88)

- Declining mobility and significant risk of falls
- Oedema affecting his legs, limiting mobility and access to wet room facilities
- Reliant on stairlift and a package of care



CHALLENGE

Declining mobility and significant risk of falls

Oedema affecting his legs, limiting mobility and access to wet room facilities

Reliant on stairlift and a package of care



INTERVENTION

- Occupational therapy assessment
- Transfer training
- Appropriate use of Zimmer frame
- Stairlift optimisation
- Community nursing support reducing oedema



OUTCOME

- Accesses upstairs safely
- Shows independently
- Reduced risk of falls
- Avoided hospital admission
- Reduced reliance on formal care



IMPACT ACHIEVED

- 182 Hours** of domiciliary care avoided annually
- Hospital Admission Avoided**
- Reduced Community Nursing Demand**



Prevention and reablement interventions enabled Charles to regain independence, avoid hospital admission and reduce ongoing care requirements.

Right support • Right time • Right outcome • Better for Charles • Better for Bridgend

www.bridgend.gov.uk



Supporting People Living with Dementia and their Carers

Improved Pathways to Primary and Secondary Mental Health Care & Support

A new weekly multidisciplinary team (MDT) process has been set up in Older Adult Mental Health Services following learning from a recent safeguarding case to improve communication and coordination between community teams and the Mental Health Liaison Team, which supports care homes and patients at the Princess of Wales Hospital.

The Liaison Team updates on patients in care homes and hospital wards, helping ensure issues are not missed.

We recognise the particular strain on carers who's loved ones are living with dementia and are working creatively to provide person-centred support.



SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY: THE TEATIME CLUB

The Teatime Club runs late afternoon to support at a time when people living with dementia often experience increased confusion, restlessness and agitation.

The purpose of the group is to provide meaningful engagement and support during this difficult period, helping individuals feel calmer and more settled.

The club offers a safe, structured and welcoming environment with activities such as refreshments, music, reminiscence, crafts and light movement.

These activities aim to reduce distress and promote wellbeing through social interaction and gentle stimulation.

The group also supports carers by offering reassurance and a short period of respite at a particularly challenging time of day.

SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY: SPECIALIST INTEGRATED DEMENTIA SERVICE AT TY PEN Y BONT

We have developed a community based “outreach” service. This service was designed to help people living with dementia or other cognitive difficulties access the support and services they need early and at the right time.

The service redesign was led by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a Team Leader, Assistant Team Leader, Day Service Assistants, Mental Health Nurse, Occupational Therapist and Occupational Therapy Assistant.

As part of this work, the team:

- Reviewed the dementia resource at Bridgend Resource Centre with a view to developing a community-based outreach model.
- Introduced a Dementia Step-Up/Step-Down Tool in October 2025.
- Developed a Dementia Hub.

Key outcomes of the service are:

- Between April and August 2025, the service supported 91 people living with dementia and their carers, who reported increased resilience and confidence in their caring role.
- 38 hospital admissions were avoided by providing support at the right time.
- The team provided 64 aids and adaptations to help people remain safe and independent at home.
- 32 behaviour plans are developed.

Prevention:

2026-27 Key Priorities

ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Improve transition between children and adult services, progressing the recommendations from the rapid review and integrating with health and education.

Strengthen support for unpaid carers and young carers by increasing the numbers of carers assessments and delivering the carers action plan.

Develop community hubs and local services that help people stay independent and connected.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Embed support for foster carers to prevent placement breakdowns providing children with stability whilst in care.

Deliver key priorities in relation to foster care recruitment and retention including Step Down foster carers, place based support.

To implement the regional approach to emotional wellbeing, specifically the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Connect Wellbeing panel, which brings partners together to provide the right support from the right service at the right time.

To improve information advice and support to children and families, strengthening quality and the impact of services, expanding community based support.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Implement actions arising from the independent evaluation of the adult social care operating model to ensure Information, Advice and Assistance are delivered consistently.

Address increasing need for social care preventatively through enhanced reablement and targeted prevention programmes.

Transform Learning Disability services, including transition, accommodation, progression planning, and daytime opportunities.

Review Occupational Therapy and Sensory Support Services to ensure effective preventative support and independence-focused pathways.

Develop accommodation plans that ensure services are available locally and meet future demand.



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**”

Working as One Social Services and Wellbeing Approach

Our social services and wellbeing operating model has effective partnerships at its heart. Partnerships are key to delivering seamless person-centred services.



Regional Arrangements

We work closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, Merthyr Tydfil Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, and third sector partners as part of the [Regional Partnership Board](#), which is chaired by Bridgend Council's Deputy Leader.

The regional Adult Services Programme Board has set its priorities for the next five years with a focus on dementia, unpaid carers, mental health, learning disabilities, older people, neurodiversity and people with sensory impairments and disabilities.

The Children's Programme board launched its "Whole System, Whole Heart" strategy which highlights a shared commitment to support emotional wellbeing, early support for families, help for care experienced children, and support for children with disabilities or complex needs.

We are also part of the Cwm [Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board](#). This is the

statutory safeguarding board which commissions Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs) and oversees the implementation of learning arising from the reviews.

A priority for 2025-26 was the launch and implementation of Regional Threshold and Eligibility Support Guidance to ensure all partners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and how services can be accessed. The guidance explains when children and young people need safeguarding support and at what level. It helps all agencies act early, make consistent decisions, work together, and improve protection for vulnerable children across the region.



Local Arrangements

The Bridgend Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH) brings together Children and Family Services, Adult Safeguarding, South Wales Police, education, and probation services. By working together in one place, partners can respond more quickly and effectively to safeguarding concerns.

In Adult Social Care, we work closely with the Health Board through our Community Resource Team (CRT) and Integrated Cluster Network Teams. The CRT provides short term health and social care services to support hospital discharge and prevent admission to hospital. The network teams support people in the community, especially those with long-term health conditions. The service is organised into three local networks linked to GP surgeries. This helps people get care close to home and allows support to change as their needs change. Nine different professions work together meaning

we can respond quickly, prevent problems from getting worse, and look at people's overall needs. We also involve families, so people do not have to repeat their story to different professionals and have more choice and control over their care.

We have approved a new formal governance arrangement - a Section 33 agreement - with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board which signals our lasting commitment to our integrated model for community services in Bridgend.

Third Sector Arrangements

Our Prevention and Wellbeing Service works in partnership with third sector organisations, Awen Cultural Trust and Halo Leisure Trust to provide leisure, cultural and wellbeing opportunities that help people stay healthy, independent and connected.

Through targeted services, leisure support, referral programmes and community initiatives, people of all ages are supported to improve their health and wellbeing, build confidence and access activities that enable them to make positive choices and live independently.

During 2025-26, we

worked with partners to expand accessible community-based activities for unpaid carers, young carers and their families. Shaped by feedback from carers, people living with dementia and older adults, these opportunities supported wellbeing, social connections and access to local services.

People Supported via Partnership Arrangements

WELLBEING MEMBERSHIPS

2,360 Supporting access to health and wellbeing opportunities

FREE SWIM OFFER

21,683 Community free swimming attendances

SUPER AGERS PARTNERSHIP

3,700 Older people supported to stay active and connected

NATIONAL EXERCISE REFERRAL SCHEME

1,900 People supported through targeted health pathways

LIBRARY & CULTURAL SERVICES

13 Welsh Public Library Standards achieved

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Highest Per capita event attendance in Wales



Partnership working has strengthened referral pathways and increased access to physical activity, dementia-friendly support, wellbeing sessions and community events. Feedback from carers continues to be positive, with many valuing the opportunity to connect with others

and access support in welcoming community settings.

In 2026–27, we will focus on developing sustainable, community-led wellbeing and leisure opportunities that continue to meet the needs of carers and local communities.

Effective Partnerships

National Framework for the Commissioning of Care

Following the introduction of the National Framework for the Commissioning of Care and Support in Wales, we undertook a self-assessment against the standards set out.

As a result we have made a number of improvements including changes to our contract templates and contract monitoring arrangements. This has also resulted in additional investment into our Commissioning Team. There has been a recommissioning of care and support at

home services this year with new contractual arrangements coming into effect from 1st April 2026. The commissioning emphasises the quality of service and outcomes for individuals supported by care providers.

Emergency Duty Partnership

Following the Care Inspectorate Wales improvement check of Children and Family Services in June 2025, there was a recommendation we provide assurance that emergency duty arrangements are effective across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.

An action plan has been developed to ensure improvements, including improved communication between the regional Emergency Duty Team (EDT) and local authority safeguarding teams.

Strengthening Community Navigation and Early Support Pathways

We aim to enable community groups and organisations to have their voice heard. We work closely with:

BAVO: Building resilient and coordinated communities through developing cross sector working with the third sector to support community resourcefulness and resilience.

Bridgend Inclusive Network Group: An umbrella group of organisations who represent children and young people who are differently abled as well as their carers

Young Carers Network: A platform for young carers and young adult carers, the network is driven by young carer ambassadors.

Healthy Living Network: There is a focus on enhancing community support and services enabling local community members to remain independent for as long as possible. The Feel Good for Life programme supporting people living with dementia or cognitive impairment

and carers and supports 100+ people. The programme has evidence of 65% increase in confidence levels regarding visiting leisure facilities.

Ageing Well Network: Protecting and promoting older people's rights, making them feel an integral part of the community and recognising that every person has inherent value regardless of age

Active 4 Life: Supporting Activities Through Town and Community Partnerships

Town and Community Councils support Active 4 Life activities during school holidays. Funding from partners has made it easier for children and young people to take part in holiday activities in their local communities.

The programme has had a positive impact, shown by high participation and continued involvement from families and partners. A total of 2499 individual children and young people were supported in 2025-26, with 7930 attendances recorded.

Attendance data, feedback from families, and

continued support from partners show that the programme helps children and young people stay active, connect with others, and remain engaged during school holidays. Working with Town and Community Councils has been a strength, allowing activities to be offered within local communities.

People As Equal Partners Working with Partners and People to Develop Community Opportunities

The Bridgend Young Carers Network has helped more children, young people and families take part in community wellbeing, leisure and support activities. Here is a snapshot of support provided via the Young Carers Network:

Bridgend Young Carers Network

The Bridgend Young Carers Network, led by young carer ambassadors aged 11–25, continued to provide opportunities for young carers to have their voices heard and help shape future services and activities

852 Young Carers ID cards rolled out

227 Primary school children involved

615 Comprehensive and Young Adult Carers involved

64 Partner organisations supporting the Young Carers network

33 Young Carer Ambassadors

23 Opportunities where Young Carers have volunteered or supported events

136 Carers attended the 'We Are Valued' days, supported by educational settings

160 Young Carers attended the Network Day

403 Halo Young Carers memberships

927 Halo Young Carers household memberships

Work with BING and partner organisations has helped more than 220 children and young adults with disabilities, along with their families, to take part in inclusive wellbeing and leisure activities through community programmes and referrals. BING has also supported 27 community organisations, created 30 community opportunities, and supported over 80 individuals with a disability to get involved.

Participation data, feedback from those involved, and ongoing partnership work all show a positive impact. There are now improved opportunities for young carers and families to access support in their local communities. In the coming year, priorities include strengthening the network, increasing participation in events, and developing more inclusive, community led opportunities.

Library, Culture and Community Hubs

Work to consult and engage people about future priorities for Library, Culture, and Community Hub services has been commissioned through partnerships, strategic discussions, and early community mapping.

The first Community Hub Strategic Board met in February, bringing together a range of partners, strengthening partnership working and strategic oversight. Feasibility tenders have also been awarded and expressions of interest submitted for future capital funding opportunities to support community hub development. Town and Community Councils has been a strength, allowing activities to be offered within local communities.





Children and Family Services

People As Equal Partners

Bridgend Youth Voice Forum

We support the Bridgend Youth Voice, a forum for care experienced young people and care leavers aged 12 to 21. The forum gives young people a chance to share their views and help shape services that affect them.

The forum is run by TGP Cymru, with support from the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer and works with national organisations, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales, to improve outcomes for children in care.

To recognise the achievements of care experienced children and young people, a range of activities were held over the past year. This

included a celebration day at Pencoed College, where children, young people and their families and carers took part in a variety of activities.

To find out how our work had made a difference over the year, the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing met with the Youth Forum and asked them three important questions. Their answers identified a number of key themes.

1. What has gone well?

Supportive relationships

- Carers, personal advisors and care home staff provided support.
- The Advocacy Service is helpful.
- Forum works well in ensuring voices are heard.

Education, skills and future goals

- Young people reported doing well academically.
- Supported to pursue interests and hobbies.
- Supported to obtain necessary training for future employment.

Preparation for Independence

- Provided with support to move to independent living.
- Supported with navigating housing and next steps.

2. What has not gone so well?

Lack of Information and Guidance

- More timely information needed on further education options.
- Don't always know who or how to ask for support.
- More signposting and reference points needed.

Inconsistent Support

- Changes in social worker, hard to build trust.
- Social Workers not always available.
- Changes in social workers not always explained.

Placement Stability

- Placement moves.
- Moved at short notice.

3. How can the support be improved?

Better planning and preparation

- Placement moves should be planned and explained

Communication

- More timely responses from professionals.
- Communication of changes.

Support and Communication

- Fewer changes in social workers.
- Social workers should meet the young person first, before reading their profile.
- More support needed for care leavers.
- Support should extend beyond 9–5, especially evenings.

These comments were shared by forum members with the Director during the meeting.



Adult Social Care

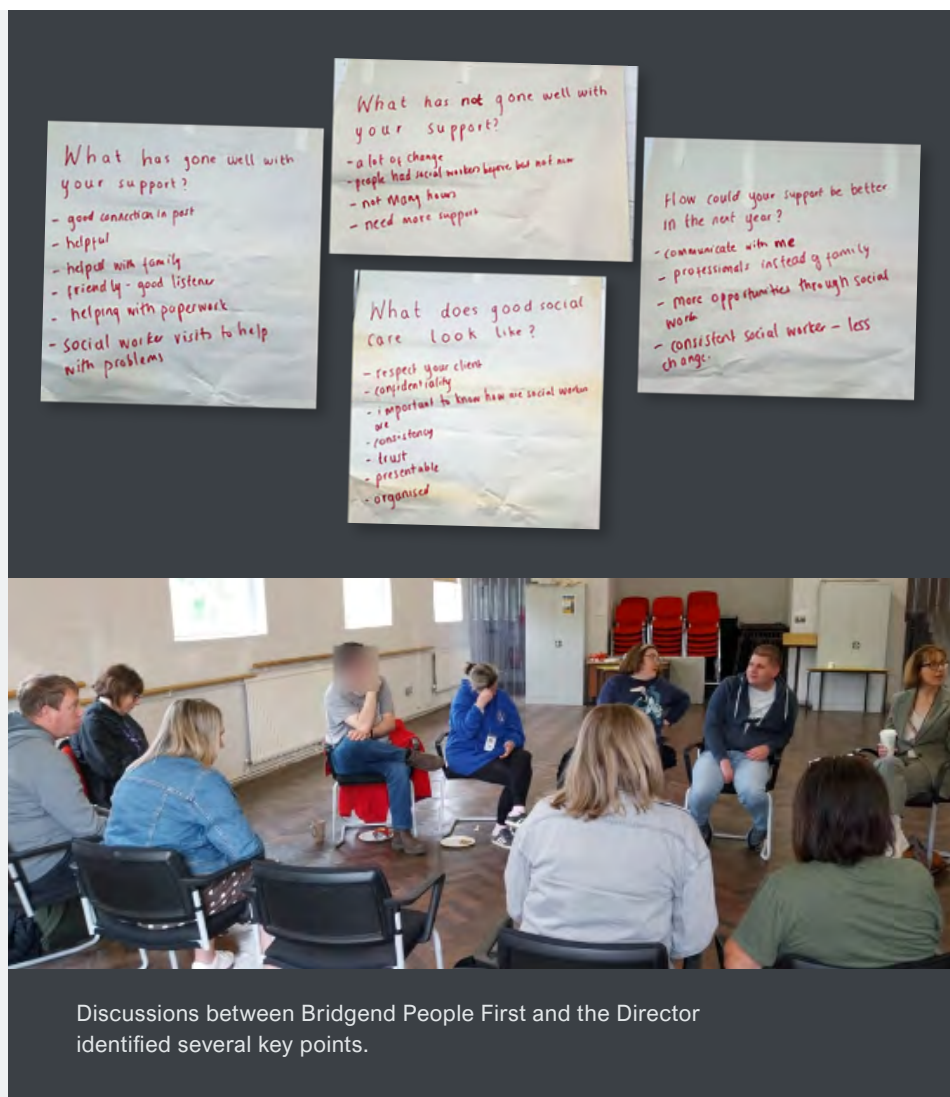
People As Equal Partners

People First Bridgend

People First Bridgend is a third sector organisation that supports adults with learning disabilities in Bridgend. They empower people to understand and use their rights, access services, and take an active part in their communities.

We work closely with People First Bridgend and to understand the difference this partnership has made over the past year, the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing met with the group to discuss a number of questions.

Before the Director's meeting, the group met to talk through the questions and help everyone feel prepared and confident to give their own answers.



Discussions between Bridgend People First and the Director identified several key points.

What has gone well during the year?

- People feel supported and safe
- Confidence and independence are growing
- Advocacy makes a big difference
- People are active in their community
- People First are supporting a parent to set up a Parent and Carer Forum

What has not gone well in the year?

- No allocated worker, rely on duty workers
- Difficulties accessing transport links
- Some activities are not suitable / interesting
- Limited employment opportunities

How can we make things better?

- Consistent Social Work Support
- Accessible (easy read) information across the Council
- Training on travel skills to further support independence
- Day time activities that suit our interests
- More volunteering and employment opportunities to be made available

Partnership & Integration:

2026-27 Key Priorities

ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Involve people with lived experience in designing and improving services.

Strengthen our work with Halo Leisure, Awen Cultural Trust , BAVO and other key network / partners.

Progress integrated community hubs providing local access to health, wellbeing support and community services.

Improving partnership data and impact reporting.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Training for partner agencies across the region to support consistent application of the threshold guidance.

Involve partners from education, health, police, parents and carers in our work to safely support more families to stay together.

To continue to develop and improve working practices between partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and families.

To review support for our care-experienced children and care leavers by reviewing our 15+ team and explore opportunities around developing lifelong links approach involving key partners.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Lead joint reviews and service redesign with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board including Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC), Continuing Health Care (CHC), Section 117, Section 28A and Bridgend Resource Centre arrangements.

Embed integrated management arrangements and governance structures within CRT and the Community Networks with strengthened leadership capacity.

Strengthen collaboration with housing, health, third sector and community partners.



Wellbeing

Quality Standards

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

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



Across Social Services

Wellbeing is supported through a range of services, activities and safeguarding arrangements that help people stay healthy, safe, independent and connected to their communities.

People are Protected and Safeguarded

The Corporate Safeguarding Board

The Corporate Safeguarding Board oversees how the Council corporately protects children and adults at risk. It makes sure all parts of the Council manage safeguarding effectively and follow the law, including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

An Internal Audit report for 2025-26 confirmed that the Board is well established and effectively oversees safeguarding across the Council. We have introduced safeguarding self-assessments across directorates. These help services review their own strengths and areas for improvement using a simple rating system to identify and ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding across the Council.

We have raised awareness of safeguarding across the wider workforce by updating intranet guidance, promoting referral processes, and improving communication between the Board, services, and partners. This helps ensure safeguarding is understood and embedded across all areas of Council work.

Training and Development: Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs)

In 2025-26, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board published 2 SUSRs relating to Bridgend Adults: 1 [Domestic Homicide Review](#) (2022) and 1 [Adult Safeguarding Review](#) (2021). There were no SUSRs for children published this year.

Learning from the reviews included raising awareness of domestic violence, mental health and suicide support across the region including preventative education in schools for children and young people. Learning also included educating education and social care staff on identifying the indicators of domestic violence, mental health and suicide for children, adults and families.

Over 2025-26 the Regional Safeguarding Board has taken learning from its quality assurance activity and SUSR's into its annual training and work program for 2026-27. Focussing on aligning the safeguarding training the with Wales Safeguarding Procedures and ensuring the areas of Domestic Violence, Mental health and Suicide awareness take the focus. The Board is developing it's 2026-2029 strategic plan which will be published later this year.

In Bridgend, we are implementing the regional exploitation strategy for children and young people which will be reviewed as part of the Board's annual quality assurance workplan for 2026-27.

A safeguarding review in North Wales has also been considered within Bridgend and across the region to ensure the learning identified within that report is taken forward in all parts of Wales. A sub-group of the corporate safeguarding board has been developed to ensure the actions identified within the review are implemented in Bridgend, providing further protection to our children and young people.

Children and Family Services

People are Protected and Safeguarded

Implementing the Regional Exploitation Strategy

Since September 2025, a regional exploitation pathway, guidance, and processes have been introduced. Multi-agency training, staff briefings, and member updates have supported the rollout, alongside a local partnership workstream over the past year. The strategy is supported by guidance for social workers and ACT which provides intensive support to young people and families facing exploitation risks.

CASE STUDY:

MULTI AGENCY INTERVENTION & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Young Person B first came to the attention of the local authority in September 2024 after an incident involving anti-social behaviour. Over the following months, they were involved in several similar incidents, including criminal damage, disorderly behaviour in public, and causing nuisance to local residents and businesses.

In response, agencies put a structured plan in place to address their anti-social behaviour. However, during mid to late 2025, concerns continued. Young Person B was still involved in incidents such as criminal damage and behaviour that caused distress to others. At the same time, there were growing worries about Young Person B's safety and wellbeing. They were reported missing on several occasions and were spending time with people who placed them at risk.

Due to these concerns, a multi-agency meeting was held and safeguarding procedures were started. By December 2025, the case moved onto the Child Sexual Exploitation family pathway due to concerns about the peer group, substance misuse, and ongoing missing episodes. During this period, Young Person B was also not attending mainstream school due to exclusion.

A range of targeted support was put in place. Young Person B received support from Youth Justice services and began attending an education setting. They also became involved in positive activities, including mechanics and training, which gave them structure and a positive focus. Progress was supported by strong relationship based work, particularly the trust Young Person B developed with their social worker.

Since these interventions were introduced, there has been significant improvement. Young Person B has not been reported missing for several months, has re-engaged with education and continues to take part in activities.

Family feedback:

The family report that Young Person B is now calmer and no longer going missing. This has reduced stress within the home, allowing family members to relax and focus on each other and their work. They are now able to work shifts without worrying about Young Person B's safety. They also shared that Young Person B has developed a strong interest in training, which has been a very positive outlet.



Children Safeguarding Enquiries

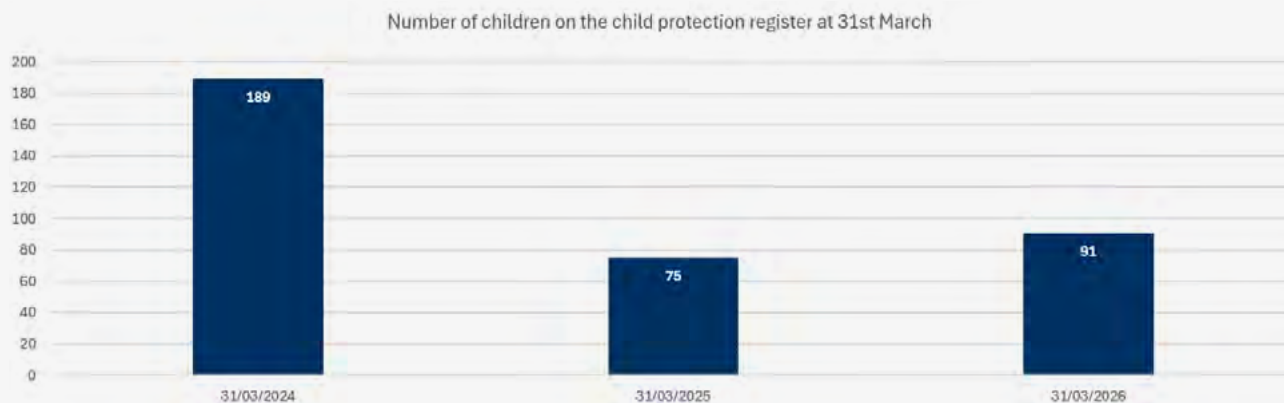
Over the last year, the number of initial safeguarding strategy meetings fell slightly by 3%, from 1,024 to 997. Fewer cases went on to require further safeguarding action, those progressing to Section 47 enquiries reduced by 9% and those progressing to an initial child protection conferences reduced by 30%.



This reflects a more proportionate response, with statutory intervention used only when necessary. Work with partner agencies, including reflective learning sessions and the use of Signs of Safety mapping has supported more consistent, effective and well-informed multi-agency decision-making.

Child Protection Registrations

At the end of March 2026, 91 children were on the Child Protection Register (CPR), compared with 75 at the same time last year.



The introduction of the Signs of Safety framework, alongside a more stable and experienced workforce, has strengthened risk assessment, planning and decision making. CPR numbers are now more closely aligned with regional and Welsh averages.



Promoting Children's Engagement and Consistent Record Keeping in Case Conferences

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service has taken steps to increase young people's attendance at their reviews by developing tools and approaches that make the process more accessible. This includes creating an animation to help children and their families understand what a Signs of Safety Child Protection Conference is and what to expect. The service has also introduced an online feedback system using QR codes, allowing participants to share their experiences. This has been in place since February 2026 and is based on research, helping the service to better understand and improve how meetings are experienced.

Alongside this, the IRO Service has engaged directly with children and young people through forums and events, and this feedback has helped shape the co-produced IRO Pledge to Young People.

The service places strong emphasis on ensuring the child's voice is central. Preparation before meetings has increased to help children feel more able to take part, for example by offering

advocacy, flexible ways of attending (including virtual or partial attendance), and opportunities to share views separately. Children's views and wishes are consistently included in reports and decision making. Where children are unable to attend, their views are still represented through other means, such as trusted adults or direct work carried out by social workers and follow-up communication is provided through child-friendly letters and resources.

EXAMPLE OF FEEDBACK FROM A YOUNG PERSON WHO RECENTLY ATTENDED A CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE:

"It was okay. I don't like people much; I have social anxiety but don't mind talking. The building was okay. I was given lots of options for speaking and sharing my views."

How the Service Responded to the Feedback:

As the young person also reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of attendees in the meeting, the IRO team is taking steps to improve practice by limiting professional attendance where appropriate, ensuring representation through a single spokesperson, and critically reviewing attendee lists to ensure they are proportionate to the decision-making requirements of the meeting.

Adult Social Care

People are Protected and Safeguarded

Safeguarding Team

Over the past year, Bridgend's Adult Safeguarding Team has performed strongly both locally and regionally, and is leading developments for the Regional Safeguarding Board. Several approaches developed in Bridgend, including the safeguarding consultation process, are now being adopted by other local authorities.

The team is responding to concerns more quickly, providing proportionate support and carrying out thorough enquiries. Lead Co-ordinators now oversee Police Protection Notices (PPNs), MARAC and MAPPA processes, strengthening professional oversight and improving support for people at risk.

In HMP Parc, the team's work has received positive feedback, particularly the contribution of the Occupational Therapist, the Significant Attempts Group and the STEPS Project, which uses peer support and lived experience. Together, these initiatives have helped reduce violence and suicide attempts within the prison.

CASE STUDY:

SAFEGUARDING BEST PRACTICE

An 18-year-old care leaver entering custody for the first time was referred to the Severe Self-Harm Rapid Response Panel due to a history of serious self-harm and suicide attempts.

A multi-agency plan was put in place to manage risk, promote wellbeing and build on the individual's strengths. Support included safety planning, family contact, access to positive activities and emotional wellbeing support.

Despite challenges linked to court delays and

uncertainty, the individual engaged well with services and developed positive relationships with professionals. As a result, risk was better managed, wellbeing improved and plans were put in place to support future stability and resettlement.



HMP Parc Social Work Team

The HMP Parc Social Work Team has strengthened its relationship with prison staff through joint working and training, helping staff better understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

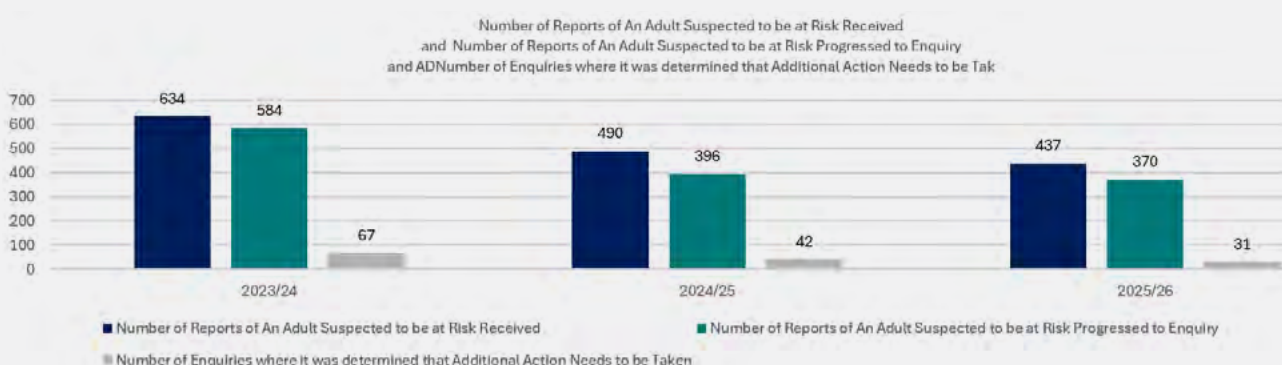
The team is now fully integrated within the prison, providing advice and support across all areas and helping prisoners access the right support at the right time.

The introduction of a Significant Attempts of Suicide and Self-Harm Forum has improved support for high-risk prisoners through tailored plans and timely interventions. This has

contributed to a reduction in violence.

Strong safeguarding arrangements are maintained through regular partnership meetings, with the prison's Safeguarding Lead actively who is involved in Safeguarding Board discussions and working closely with MASH to seek advice and share good practice.

Safeguarding Reports



During 2025-26, the team received 437 contacts, compared with 490 in 2024-25, a decrease of 11%.

This reduction is due to the consultation process now being well established within the team. Professionals are encouraged to discuss concerns with the team before deciding whether an Adult at Risk (AAR) referral is needed. As a result, the Adult at Risk referrals received by the team are now more appropriate and consistent, with a high proportion progressing to an enquiry.

Learning Disability Safeguarding Group

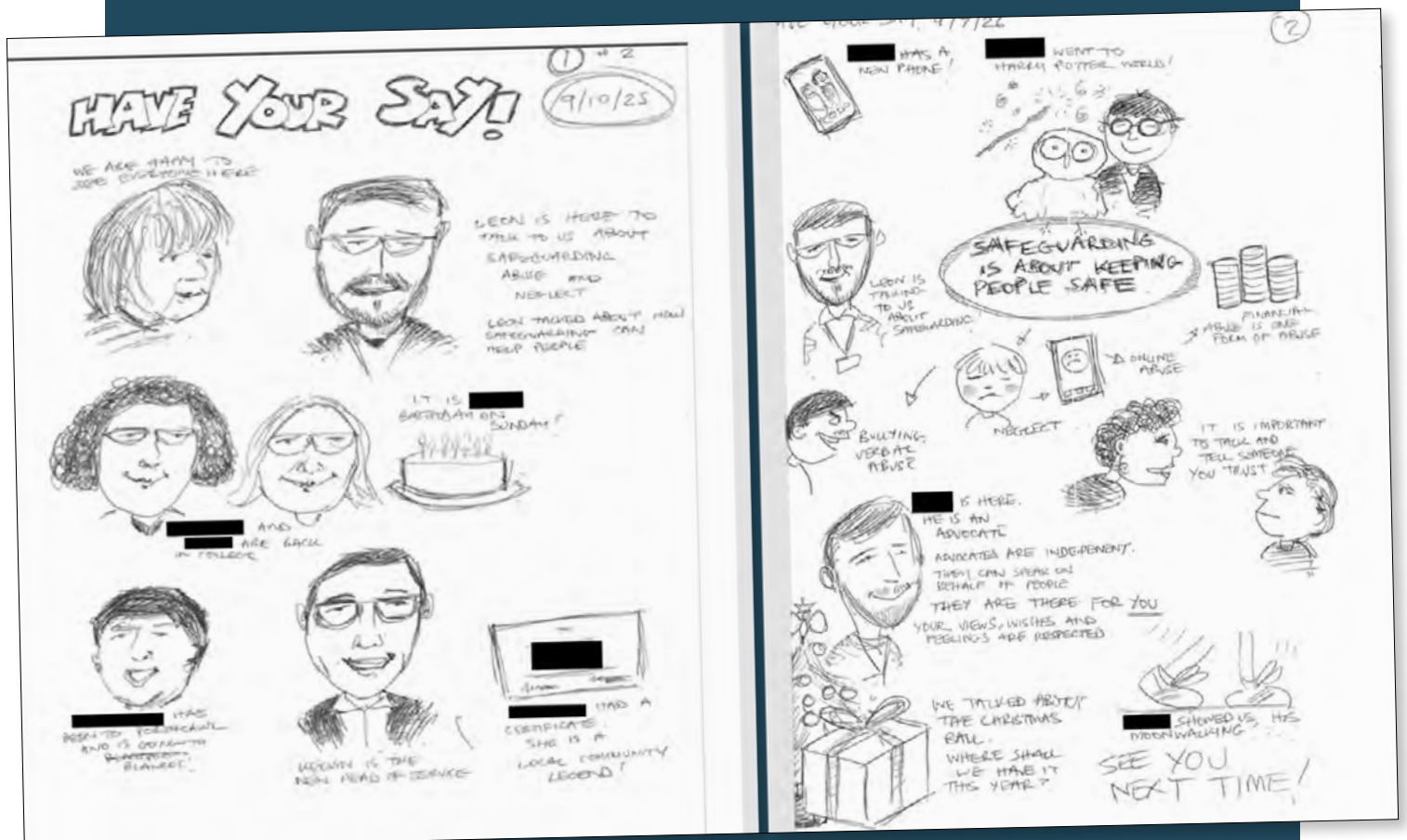
A safeguarding focus group was established to improve understanding of adult safeguarding among adults with learning disabilities and to explore their experiences of the safeguarding process.

Accessible workshops were delivered using easy read materials, bringing together members of the Having a Say and People First groups to promote engagement, learning, and discussion.

The sessions increased participants' understanding of safeguarding, including

recognising abuse, reporting concerns, and understanding what happens during a safeguarding enquiry.

Here are examples from the minutes of two separate Having Your Say meetings that highlight the people's engagement.



Wellbeing, Choice and Independence

While safeguarding is an important part of wellbeing, wellbeing is about more than keeping people safe from abuse, neglect or harm. It also means supporting people to stay as healthy, independent and connected as possible, make their own choices, and achieve the things that are important to them.

This report outlines a number of key examples that reflect these wider aspects of wellbeing, including promoting health, independence, choice and positive outcomes. The following case studies from Children's and Family Services and Adult Social Care provide further examples of how wellbeing is actively supported in practice.

CASE STUDY:

SUPPORTING FAMILY WELLBEING AND BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

A family with three children were supported by Early Help following involvement from statutory services due to concerns relating to domestic abuse, escalating conflict within the home and difficulties managing the behaviour of one of the children. The family reported feeling overwhelmed and described relationships within the home as increasingly strained, with communication having broken down between family members.

An Early Help Family Support Worker completed a Signs of Safety assessment with the family, focusing on understanding what mattered most to them and identifying existing strengths and support networks. The intervention centred around improving routines and boundaries within the home, supporting positive communication, and helping parents develop confidence in managing challenging behaviour. The family were also linked into community based domestic abuse support and parenting interventions.

Work was delivered in a flexible and relationship based way, with regular home visits and practical support tailored around the family's needs. Over time, the family began to engage more consistently, conflict within the home reduced, school attendance improved and parents reported feeling more confident in managing situations independently.

At the end of the intervention, the family reported that they felt listened to and supported without feeling judged. They stated that having one consistent worker helped them remain focused during a difficult period and prevented issues from escalating further.

CASE STUDY:

INCREASED INDEPENDENCE & SERVICE REDUCTION

Adult D, aged 52, experienced a stroke which had a significant impact on their independence. They initially required support from three staff members, four times a day, to meet their care needs.

Their condition was also affecting their ability to continue with their university course. Through support from the Integrated Network Team, Adult D received input from Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Dietetics and Social Work services.

Changes were made to their equipment, and therapy staff worked closely with Adult D to reduce the level of support needed. A new care package was then developed, enabling them to return to their university studies.

The changes not only increased Adult D's independence and supported them to do what mattered to them but also reduced their care and support by 728 hours a year.

Wellbeing: 2026-27 Key Priorities

ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Deliver the directorate's digital strategy by enhancing case management system readiness and implementing innovative technologies, including technology enabled care (TEC) Magic Notes, Copilot and quality assurance tools.

Make it easier for people to find information, advice and support when they need it.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Fully embed the regional exploitation strategy fully ensuring young people are protected from harm.

Improve how the voice of children is reflected within their assessments and care plans.

Encourage children's participation in meetings that are about and affect them so their voice is central in decision-making about them.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Embed safeguarding learning from Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSRs).

Use performance, quality and customer feedback information to drive continuous improvement.

4

OTHER INFORMATION

Inspections and Reviews

Care Inspectorate Wales undertakes inspections and improvement activity to provide assurance that services are safe, effective and promote positive outcomes for people who use them. Inspection findings are used to support learning and continuous improvement across the Directorate.

Children and Family Services

In June 2025, CIW undertook [an assurance check](#) of the local authority and fostering services. The findings from the inspection highlighted “significant improvements” across the service. This included the recognition of the improved workforce position with less reliance on agency staff, our “Grow Our Own” model supporting increased permanent recruitment, our international social work recruitment programme. Improvements were noted in relation to Senior Management and Management oversight and improved morale within the workforce with 86% of staff reporting that they would recommend working in Bridgend to others.

Significant improvements were also noted within Fostering Services with all previous areas of concerns resolved and a small number of recommendations related to training and reviews of carers as areas for improvement.

CIW made a series of recommendations which are being taken forward and will be a part of a new 3-year strategic plan that will commence in September 2026.

During 2025, CIW also undertook inspections across the Council’s regulated children’s residential services. Overall, inspections identified good quality care and recognised the progress made since the previous inspection cycle.

Three services, Hillsboro, Harwood House and Sunny Bank (August 2025), achieved ‘Good’ rating across all inspection themes. Inspectors highlighted children’s voices being heard, the use of advocacy and child-friendly information, trauma-informed and personalised support, increasingly stable staff teams and strong leadership and management arrangements. Children were supported to maintain positive relationships, engage in education and develop independence skills.

Following presentation of the inspection findings to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting, further inspections were completed at Hillsboro and Bakers Way. These inspections were positive, with no Areas for Improvement identified.

Adult Social Care

During 2025–26, inspections of the Council's in-house residential services demonstrated positive outcomes and reflected the commitment of staff and managers to delivering high-quality, person-centred care.



Bryn y Cae Residential Home achieved an 'Excellent' rating for Wellbeing and 'Good' ratings across Care and Support, Environment and Leadership and Management. Inspectors recognised the warm and welcoming environment, meaningful activities and community links, positive relationships between residents and staff and effective governance arrangements.

In recognition of the commitment and dedication of staff, colleagues from Bryn y Cae Residential Home attended the Buckingham Palace Garden Party during 2025. This prestigious invitation provided an opportunity to celebrate the contribution made by the team and

reflected the positive culture and high standards of care delivered across Bridgend's residential services.

Ty Cwm Ogwr Residential Home achieved 'Good' ratings across all four domains. Inspectors highlighted the kindness and compassion demonstrated by staff, effective safeguarding arrangements, safe medication management and a clean, welcoming environment. Despite a period of staffing challenges, inspectors recognised the impact of leadership and positive culture within the home.

Ty Ynysawdre and **Ty Llwynderw** both achieved 'Good' ratings across all four domains. Inspectors highlighted positive wellbeing outcomes, person-centred care, effective safeguarding and medication management arrangements, welcoming environments and strong leadership and management. Staff teams were recognised for promoting dignity, choice and independence, with robust quality assurance arrangements supporting continuous improvement. No Areas for Improvement or Priority Action Notices were issued following either inspection.

No Areas for Improvement or Priority Action Notices were issued following the inspections of adult residential services undertaken during 2025–26.



HMP Parc

HM Inspectorate of Prison's independent review report of HMP Parc in January 2026 highlighted:

*"Social Care provision was **effective** and **well managed**."*

&

*"A well-resourced social care team was based in the prison, which created **good visibility** and **accessibility**."*

Alongside this, the team were recognised with a partnership award for providing unwavering support to individuals with complex health conditions, as well as those who are requiring end of life care:

"The team go unnoticed in such a large establishment and feel they should have the recognition they deserve for being such a fantastic team".

Learning and Improvement

Inspection findings across Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care demonstrate the commitment of staff and managers to providing safe, compassionate and person centred services.

Learning from inspections is embedded within service improvement plans and monitored through established governance and quality assurance arrangements, including the Directorate's Regulatory Tracker, quarterly corporate performance arrangements and annual self-assessment processes. This ensures that areas identified through regulatory activity continue to inform practice, strengthen services and support positive outcomes for children, young people, adults and carers.



Complaints and Representations

Complaints about social services are dealt with under the [Social Services Complaints Procedure \(Wales\) Regulations 2014](#) and the Welsh Government's guidance, "[A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services](#)." These frameworks give people a way to raise concerns about the services they receive and help ensure complaints are handled fairly and as quickly as possible.

Over the last year, the number of complaints we received increased slightly by 3%. The most common concerns raised were about communication, staff behaviour, and decisions relating to case management and reviews. Together, these accounted for 38% of all complaints received.

We always aim to provide a good local resolution for the people, families and carers who use our services. This approach was successful in 98% of cases, with complaints being resolved either informally or at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints process.

The remaining 2% of complaints were investigated via the stage two (formal) statutory procedure. At this stage, an independent investigator reviews the complaint and produces a report of their findings. The report may include recommendations to help us improve the services we provide.

We regularly review complaints to identify what we are doing well and where we can improve. We also make sure that any recommendations and lessons learned from Stage 2 complaints are put into practice. In response to stage 2 complaints received during the year, here is a summary of learning outcomes implemented:

SERVICE AREA	LEARNING OUTCOME
Adult Social Care	- Targeted service improvements in Adult Social Care included identifying the need to strengthen understanding of the duty to proactively offer carers' assessments, improve clear and accessible communication, and ensure consistent identification of eligible carers. - In response, the service has delivered staff workshops, established a dedicated Carers Assessment Social Worker role, introduced enhanced auditing and monitoring, and embedded actions within the Carers Steering Group and training programme. - This has resulted in improved staff awareness, governance, and consistency, with a stronger emphasis on proactive, person-centred support and improved experience for carers and those seeking help.

SERVICE AREA	LEARNING OUTCOME
Children and Family Services / Education Engagement Team	- Complaint investigation findings highlighted the need to strengthen governance, confidentiality, and consistency in handling referrals involving staff, alongside improving clarity for schools on safeguarding processes and thresholds. - In response, the service is developing a joint protocol for managing referrals, reinforcing a strict 'need to know' approach, and enhancing partnership working with schools through training, audits, and ongoing engagement to improve understanding of referral processes and safeguarding thresholds. - Improvements also include a focus on robust and accurate record-keeping, supporting accountability and transparency. Collectively, these actions strengthen safeguarding practice, information governance, and consistency of decision-making, leading to improved confidence in how concerns are managed.

The Citizen Voice Body

The Citizen Voice Body, known as [Llais](#) is an independent organisation that helps people have their say about health and social care services in Wales. It works to make sure that people's views are heard and considered when services are planned, delivered, and improved.

Llais, which is the Welsh word for Voice, also provides free advocacy support and advice to help people raise concerns or make complaints about health and social care services.

During 2025–26, we received one complaint about Adult Social Care that was raised with the support of a Llais advocate.

You can find more information about complaints and feedback in Bridgend in the Social Services Complaints and Feedback 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

KEY PARTNERS / ADVOCACY SUPPORT

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

KEY LEGISLATION / GUIDANCE

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

Welsh Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2035

Health and Social Care (Wales) Act (2025)

5

Glossary

Active Offer This is the Welsh Government commitment to provide health and social care services in Welsh without people having to ask for them. Welsh language services should be offered as a standard part of care.

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.

Assistive Technology Equipment or technology that helps people in Wales live more independently and carry out everyday activities.

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 wellbeing 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.

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.

Multi-Agency Public Protection

Arrangements (MAPPA) Legal framework used protect the public. It brings together different organisations, such as the police, probation and prison services, to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment

Conference (MARAC) A regular confidential meeting where different organisations work together to share information and create safety plans for people who are at high risk of serious harm from domestic abuse.

Mwy Na Geiriau / More than

Just 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.

Operating Without Registration

(OWR) When a care provider is delivering a service that legally requires registration with the relevant regulator but is doing so without being registered.

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.

Police Protection Notice (PPN)

A form completed by the police when there are concerns about someone's safety or wellbeing, so that appropriate support or safeguarding action can be considered.

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.

Section 33 Agreement A formal arrangement in Wales allowing the NHS and local councils to work together by sharing budgets, resources, and responsibilities for delivering care services.

Single Unified Safeguarding

Review (SUSR) A multi-agency review of a serious safeguarding incident to understand what happened, identify learning, improve safeguarding practice, and help prevent similar incidents in the future.

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 wellbeing 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.

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.

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Meeting of:	SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	10 SEPTEMBER 2026
Report Title:	SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	SARAH TRIPP, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	The Social Services Representations and Complaints Annual Report for 2025/26 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. The report includes - • numbers of complaints and representations received and resolved at each stage; • adherence to timescales; • the nature of the complaints and representations, and; • a summary of the lessons learned and actions taken by the Authority in relation to the complaints and representations received. The report also provides a cross-section of feedback across the Directorate in the form of comments and compliments.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the draft 2025/26 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 22nd September 2026. 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 1st 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 2025/26 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
151	Concerns resolved outside of the complaints procedure
407	Compliments / Comments

This is an increase in the overall number of complaints and concerns received over the last year: 178 complaints and concerns were received in 2025/26 compared to 170 in 2024/25. The report shows an increase in the number of compliments received compared to the previous reporting period; 407 compliments received in 2025/26 compared to 374 in 2024/25. 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 people submitting concerns or complaints. The number of matters resolved by this approach in 2025/26 was 151 (84.8%), compared with 143 (84%) in 2024/25 and 141 (77%) in 2023/24. This evidences the continued focus on effective complaints handling via a local, citizen-centered approach.

3.4 During 2025/26, 20 complaints were received by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; 12 related to Children and Family Services and 8 related to Adult Social Care. None of these complaints progressed to investigation. This is an increase from the 11 complaints received in 2024/25 that did not progress to investigation.

3.5 During 2025/26, 1 complaint was addressed through the Corporate Complaints Procedure relating to Children and Family Services. The complaint concerned a data breach.

- 3.6 During 2025/26, a total of 27 complaints were addressed in accordance with the Statutory Social Services Complaints Procedure, equating to 15.2% of all concerns or complaints received. 23 complaints were resolved at Stage 1 and 4 progressed through to Stage 2. Stage 2 is the formal investigation stage requiring the appointment of an Independent Investigator. Information within the report suggests that complaints progressing through the formal Stage 2 process continue to demonstrate a higher degree of complexity.
- 3.7 The report highlights how the Directorate applies lessons learned from complaints within its service areas. During the reporting period, notable examples included strengthening understanding of carers' assessments within Adult Social Care and improving safeguarding referral governance, confidentiality and record keeping within Children and Family Services. The complaints department also continues to work alongside service managers, senior leaders and the Quality Assurance Officer to ensure learning from complaints informs service improvement activity.
- 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 112; 86 related to Adult Social Care and 26 related to Children and Family Services. This represents a decrease from the 131 Member Referrals received in 2024/25.
- 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 2025/26. 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	Staff across the Directorate have worked collaboratively with citizens to put things right and achieve positive outcomes 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, and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and commissioned services. The Complaints Team supports safeguarding activity by ensuring that any complaints containing safeguarding concerns are referred to the appropriate safeguarding teams in a timely manner. During 2025/26, safeguarding concerns featured within a number of complaints received and were considered alongside complaints processes where appropriate.

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 2025/26 attached as Appendix 1 and provide feedback in preparation for the full report being presented to Cabinet on 22nd September 2026 for approval.

Background documents

None

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

SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2025 / 2026



**SOCIAL SERVICES
REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS 2025/26**

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Summary of the Complaints Procedure
3. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
4. Member Referral
5. Complaints and representations received from the
Citizen Voice Body “Llais”
6. Engagement and Feedback
7. Statistical Information 2025/2026
8. How complaints were Resolved and Lessons Learned
9. Compliments
10. Achievements in 2025/2026
11. Objectives for 2026/2027
12. Equalities

1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 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 eleventh 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 1st 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 2025/2026, **20** complaints were received by the PSOW's Office, **12** of which related to Children and Family Services, **8** in respect of Adult Social Care. None were progressed to investigation.

The PSOW publishes annual letters for Welsh local authorities which include comparative complaints data, enabling organisations to benchmark their performance against other local authorities across Wales. These letters provide valuable insight into complaint volumes and outcomes, helping to inform service improvement and governance arrangements. At the time this report was written, the PSOW had not yet published its annual letter for 2025/26. As a result, the most recent comparative data was unavailable for inclusion or analysis in this report, however, you can access the letters directly from the PSOW's website by clicking [here](#).

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 2025/2026, Member referrals were received as follows:-

Table 1

2025/2026	Number of Referrals
Adult Social Care	86
Children and Family Services	26
Total	112

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 1st 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, we received **1** complaint from a Llais advocate; the complaint related to 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 2025/2026 is set out below:

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 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, **897** surveys were distributed, of which, **164** responses were received. This is a 18% response rate, which is a decrease from the response rate of 21% in the previous year. Although the percentage response rate was lower than last year, a higher number of surveys were distributed. The actual number of responses received remained broadly consistent with the previous year. Overall, the level of satisfaction from this survey was very high; 99% said they would recommend Care and Repair to others, 99% said they would recommend Bridgelink Telecare to others, 82% said Telecare had improved their quality of life, while 18% did not answer or were unsure.

General comments provided include:

Since Care & Repair have been involved with us, we've found everyone very, very, helpful, polite, and patient so far. Keep up the excellent work!

Your people really care. Full marks!!

A was quick, clean and very pleasant manner- excellent service.

B was quite amazing. He left and we knew everything we needed to, explained very, very well.

The engineer was very good at explaining the telecare service to [my] elderly parent.

C who came and installed the Bridgelink explained in an easy way of how it works and was friendly and polite at all times. Extremely happy with him and the service he supplied in my home. Well done.

The **Support at Home** survey is provided to all people in receipt of the service. It is provided within their file, and staff encourage those leaving the service to provide their feedback. Of the 704 surveys that were distributed, 63 people responded (response rate of 9%) Although the response rate is low, the overall level of satisfaction from those who completed the survey was very high.

General comments provided include:

More than and gave me more confidence back.

Could not fault any of the home staff.

Service expectations first class. On time always. Always pleasant, understanding, very friendly. 200 out of 10!

Brilliant service by carers.

Encouraged and prompted to help build my confidence and feel optimistic about what I can still do.

Bryn Y Cae is a purpose-built residential home providing residential, respite, dementia and short-term reablement care for older people. The home has 37 bedrooms across dementia, frail elderly and reablement units and offers a safe, homely environment that promotes independence, wellbeing and personal choice. Respite care is also available to support families and carers.

Comments provided include:

To all the staff, Thank you so much for all the care you give my sister while she was with you and for the end of life care you give her and how kind you were to the family. Thank you so much.

To all staff, thank you for all your hard work over the Christmas period , doing everything you could to make it enjoyable & special for the residents. For their meal out, staff went 'all out' to make them feel special – nails, hair, clothes... and atmosphere. We as a family appreciate these touches. Of course, you work hard throughout the year and that is also appreciated. Best wishes for 2026.

Just like to say a big thank you to everyone at Bryn y Cae. I know it's a hard but rewarding job. Without people like you who are so caring, you make such a difference to homes this week.

I thank God every day for mum being in Bryn y Cae, she has the best care possible and I am so grateful to D and her wonderful staff for caring for her in such a caring and loving way, night and day.

E explained that she thought her current support at Bryn Y Cae was “wonderful”. She was very happy with the care from “all the boys and girls” (care/support staff), everyone was very kind, she felt safe knowing that she had their help available whenever she needed it “I only have to press my buzzer and they come”. She spoke very positively about the night time support she has from care staff so she is able to maintain her continence, she described how staff respond several times a night in a very timely way when she calls using her buzzer, support her to transfer from bed to use the commode and help her to feel clean and comfortable and back into bed so she can sleep.

The West Integrated Cluster Network is a multidisciplinary team supporting adults with frailty, long-term health conditions, disabilities and mental health needs. Social workers work alongside health professionals, primary care services, and community organisations to provide coordinated, person-centred support that promotes wellbeing, independence, and quality of life.

Comments include:

Many thanks for the update which all sounds very positive and thank you all so much for getting things to this stage so incredibly quickly. Huge thanks once again.

Thank you so much for this update I cannot begin to tell you how much I appreciate your input and communication; it's provided a great weight off my mind for my father's ongoing care.

I am emailing to pass on positive feedback for Social Work Assistant, E, who is currently providing support to my Grandmother, F and to my uncle, G who is my grandmother's carer. I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the incredible support and care provided by E, who has gone above and beyond in providing compassionate care. E has been on hand for any worries/ concerns/ changes regarding my grandmother, and has attended multiple home visits to discuss support options, and has facilitated these as soon as possible (many at short notice when additional support is needed). The provision of information has been exceptional and she has kept me in constant communication regarding referrals, panel timeframes and outcomes. This has made such a difference to us. E has demonstrated consistent empathy, supporting my uncle who is overwhelmed with his caring responsibilities, and is also neurodivergent. She has suggested many improvements and options for reducing the load for him, something I would never have been in the position to do. E has listened, been an advocate, and found solutions whilst bringing comfort to the family during challenging times. It is clear in the care E provides that she is extremely passionate about her role, and she has made an incredible impact on not only myself, but my uncle and grandmother. I genuinely can't put into words how appreciative we are, and the positive impact this has had during a really difficult time. I wanted to ensure that E's work and commitment to providing exceptional care did not go unnoticed.

I wanted to thank you again for your support and speedy decisions from you and your manager too. This has no doubt enabled my dad to be with mam throughout her progressive illnesses which was especially important for dad over the past week.

Not sure what dad will do about continuing to live here but am sure this discussion will come up over the coming days.

We are all heartbroken that mam has gone but so grateful to the fabulous carers and management care team at Llys Ton. My dad and sis also told me the District Nursing Team have been amazing in their monitoring and responding to mam's pain relief and agitation too which meant has mam could stay at home with dad.

Thanks again for compassionate support, timely communication updates and continued help it's meant so much to dad and the family.

Hi, I would just like to say how helpful the lady on duty fri 5th Dec was.

I only caught her first name H.

Her help and compassion on the phone was amazing and helped practically as well as supportively. I feel a little silly but wanted to reach out and say thank you.

The **Supported Living** team is designed to help people to live independently within their own homes. The supported living service offers tailored care and support that helps people deal with day-to-day living, housing management and community integration.

Staff provide support for people with a learning disability within their own home and in the community. Staff are committed to enabling people to maintain and develop skills, providing support that is personalised to meet individual needs.

Comments provided include:

I know its not been easy and continues to be the case but I just wanted to say a really really big thank you to you both and to your supported living team for all your help and support. You have all been amazing with I and gone over and above. I know that (for now, until things change) she is totally in the right place. I haven't been directly involved with Learning Disability Support for a number of years now and its been a lovely reminder of how very skilled, caring and passionate you all are about supporting people with more complex needs. I'm grateful for the support you've provided me in helping with the transition and I is really lucky to have your support.

J invited myself and K to the 'have your say' group on Friday last week. Thank you for the invite J it really was a lovely end to a busy week and made both myself and K smile from start to finish. It was wonderful. I just wanted to say J's manor and engagement with the service users was just so lovely to see. Her passion shone through. She was so respectful, gave everyone time to speak and feel included, and the opportunity for them all to feel special. Me and K left and immediately spoke about what a lovely time this was. I just wanted to give some well deserved acknowledgement of a lovely experience.

Thank you so much to your staff for the past few days they have been absolutely amazing. L has been a godsend with M, and their relationship has been lovely to watch.

Thank you for arranging for N to accompany O and I to the CAREFEST event last Tuesday, it was a pleasure to work with her on the day.

N demonstrated sound knowledge of her area of work and shared excellent enthusiasm and her joy in working in supported living, she gave the learners a positive and enjoyable overview of the service and the benefits of working in Social Care.

I hope to and look forward to working with her in the future to promote social care.

The **North 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:

We have today completed care proceedings for P&Q and I just wanted to highlight what a pleasure it was to work with R. R kept me updated throughout which I greatly appreciated. R has a very child focused approach and despite having to manage very challenging situations maintained positive trusting relationships with the children. When actions were needed to be completed now or in the next steps for these children, I know it will be undertaken thoroughly and with the child's experience in mind, in addition to R's assessments being thorough and well balanced. I have been very impressed by R's efficiency and style of working and cannot wait to have the pleasure of working with her again.

I would like to provide some positive feedback regarding S. S has consistently ensured that all information, paperwork, and updates have been completed in a timely and thorough manner. S's organisation and proactive approach have helped keep the placement running smoothly.

S communicates clearly, keep everyone well informed, and has shown a strong commitment to supporting T and prospective adopter throughout the process. S was happy to answer any questions from the adopter in the review today.

U (mum) said that V has been excellent working with her and she felt at ease from their first conversation. U said that without V's help and support she wouldn't be feeling confident today and it has totally changed her opinion on the process. U said that she found V easy to talk to and she has been 'amazing'. W (dad) also agreed with V's points and said that he has been less stressed about the process over the last few weeks. During conference, the family were also complimentary of V commenting on how the triggers work in particular, was really positive. U said that the red/ amber green work made her realise how she had been, as there were lots of things that came up during this session she didn't realise she did but she has found it, really good to know. Good work V 😊 It would be good to share the work with the teams as positive practice where appropriate.

Having you as X's social worker has made a huge positive difference for both me and X. The changes that are happening now are because of your involvement, and I want to make sure that the situation that unfolded when I became his Appointee never happens again - not to X, and not to anyone else.

The **Edge of Care Service** is a multi-agency team that provides intensive support to vulnerable children and families, helping children remain safely at home and preventing the need for care. Working with a range of specialists, the service delivers targeted early intervention and has successfully prevented over 90% of the children it supports from entering care.

Comments include:

Both Y and Z were great with my daughters. My children really have a good rapport with them. Both Y and Z do go above and beyond.

I do want to thank Y and Z for the time they gave to the family.

I found both A and B to be respectful and courteous and was happy that they were so child centred.

Having them assist in bringing the family pet to see the children from their fathers.

Taking time to build a positive rapport making my children feel more valued and respected.

You are a superstar! Having someone to vent to while everything was going on. Offering help and advice. Even though you're a 'professional' you seemed like family to us.

Sending out the Happy New Year texts before it goes mad! Good riddance 2025 & here's to a happy & healthy 2026 for everyone.

I don't accept help & struggle with kindness but thank you for giving me both those things these last few months when I've needed it most!

You didn't give up on me & maybe that's all I've ever needed.

Thanks for just being you C & we'll see you in the New Year.

The **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** service provides independent oversight of care planning for looked after children and those subject to Child Protection Plans. The service reviews progress, chairs statutory reviews and Child Protection Conferences and works with children, families and partner agencies to ensure effective safeguarding and positive outcomes.

Comments include:

I don't know if you will see the answers I have given on the questionnaire but I feel it is important for you to know that you have been so helpful since you've been the IRO for my children. I always feel heard, seen and understood after having chats with you and the way you reassure the children that while you cannot make decisions for them you are able to make recommendations that benefit them and their wishes and feelings. We can all appreciate this is a difficult time for the children and having someone who is for them makes a huge difference to them. I don't think words will ever be enough to thank you for your dedication and hard work that you put into these CLAR meetings.

And if you could please let D know via feedback that having her at the CLAR meetings for E and F was lovely to hear positive feedback from contact and it made us feel that not everything is bad.

I have loads of gratitude for you.

I have met with G a few times over the last few weeks and can't tell you how helpful she has been. She has very kindly given me her time; Sharing with me some of the systems she has in place and things that have worked for her team, and it's been really useful for me.

We have also talked about some of the challenges we have experienced in our respective teams and some of the ways we have both overcome these, sharing practices, shared experiences, managements systems etc

Mostly, it's reassuring for me to know about other managers who have overcome challenges and that with perseverance and determination improvements are made, and things do get better.

Just wanted to share some feedback following an RCPCC I attended this am chaired by H.

I have sent this direct to H.....

I just wanted to comment that I have attended a few meetings with yourself and wanted to say that I think you have a wonderful approach, you are conscious of jargon/language used in meetings, you are clear and concise, put families at ease and very balanced in your engagement with professionals and families.

My team have also commented on how lovely H is and heard other professionals comment also, so wanted to share 😊.

We have received a compliment for a conference I chaired on the 31/07/2025. Father, I stated that he enjoyed the conference (ICPC) and felt that it was organised and run well by the conference chair.

Adult Social Care - Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)

Providers

Bridgend County Borough Council 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 2025/26 reporting period, the BVC Advocacy Hub received an average of 65 phone contacts per quarter, an increase from the 35 per quarter the previous year. The helpline also reported dealing with a high proportion of contacts requiring intensive advocacy intervention, suggesting that many enquiries related to complex advocacy needs requiring specialist support.

Professionals remained the primary source of helpline enquiries, accounting for 58% of contacts, whilst 41% came directly from individuals or family members. This highlights the important role professionals continue to play in facilitating access to advocacy services, while also demonstrating growing direct engagement from service users and their families.

Referrals and contacts to the BVC Hub are triaged and referred to the most appropriate support service. During the reporting period:

- 54 cases (approximately 27%) resulted in a statutory advocacy referral;
- 54 cases (approximately 27%) involved signposting or transfer to another service;
- 107 cases (approximately 54%) received information, advice and coaching support;

A further 11 support service referrals, 8 welfare/safeguarding interventions, 8 non-statutory advocacy referrals, 5 self-advocacy support interventions and 4 direct advocacy interventions were provided.

Across 2025/26, the BVC Hub made referrals to six specialist advocacy organisations: Mental Health Matters Wales, People First Bridgend, Advocacy Support Cymru, Tros Gynnal Plant, Llais Cymru and National Youth Advocacy Services. Mental Health Matters Wales received the highest number of referrals (35), followed by People First Bridgend (15) and Advocacy Support Cymru (14).

Overall, the BVC Hub answered more than 260 calls, generated almost 3,000 website views, reached 80 people through events, and made 70 advocacy referrals during the year. The majority of contacts were resolved through information, advice and coaching, with substantial numbers also requiring formal advocacy referrals or signposting to alternative specialist services.

Most referrals received by advocacy providers related to key adult social care processes, including assessments, care and support planning and reviews, accessing information and advice, accommodation issues, safeguarding concerns and complaints. Data from People First Bridgend demonstrated that care and support planning/reviews and access to information and advice were the most common advocacy issues. Mental Health Matters Wales also reported increasing involvement in complex safeguarding, legal, family and care-related cases, indicating sustained demand for specialist advocacy support to help individuals participate in decision-making, prevent escalation of issues and maintain wellbeing throughout statutory processes.

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, 113 children and young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with a total of 135 issues. This represents a decrease of 20 young people compared to 133 who accessed the service in the previous year. Of the 113, 42 were accessing the service for the first time, down from 58 first-time users in the previous year.

There was also a decrease in Active Offers (AO), with 34 received this year, compared to 66 last year. A total of 107 children and young people were eligible for the AO during the year, a 19% reduction from 132 the previous year. Of those eligible, 34 were referred for AO, meaning that 32% of eligible individuals received a referral, compared to 50% the previous year.

The reduction in the number of children and young people accessing advocacy through the AO may be attributable to a decrease in the number of children becoming care experienced and a reduction in the number of children involved in child protection processes. To strengthen advocacy provision and promote improved uptake of the AO, TGP has met with the local authority to review current advocacy arrangements and recording mechanisms. This work aims to increase understanding of the local authority's responsibilities in promoting the AO, strengthen referral pathways, and support more effective monitoring of advocacy access and outcomes going forward.

7. STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2025/2026

Number of Representations Received and Timescales

Table 2

Total Number of Complaints and Representations Received Statutory Complaints Procedure – 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026		
Complaints	Adult Social Care	Children and Family Services
Informal (resolved outside of the formal complaints procedure)	46	105
Stage 1	11	12
Stage 2	2	2
Total Complaints	<u>178</u>	
Compliments	Adult Social Care	Children and Family Services
	257	150
Total Compliments	<u>407</u>	

A total of 170 complaints were received in the previous period 2024/25. The table above shows a small **increase in complaints** received during this reporting period, + **4.7%** compared to the previous year.

A total of 374 compliments were received in the previous period 2024/25. The table above shows an **increase in compliments** received during this reporting period, + **8.8%** compared to the previous year.

Timescales

97% 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, **30%** of complaints led to a meeting or telephone call held within 10 working days, which is an increase from the 16.6% the previous year. However, only **3.8%** of Stage 1 complaints 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.

The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) to draft complaints has had a significant impact on complaint handling times. While AI-generated complaints are often well-structured, they are typically longer, more complex and raise multiple issues within a single submission, increasing both the volume and complexity of complaints received. Additionally, they can include misinformation if not proof-read by the complainant prior to submission. Many have included references to English legislation that do not apply in Wales, which can inadvertently mislead complainants and cause frustration.

AI has also made it easier for complainants to generate follow-up correspondence, resulting in a substantial rise in emails requesting updates or reiterating existing concerns. This increase in correspondence has created additional administrative demands and placed further pressure on staff resources. In addition, where AI-generated correspondence is submitted without being fully reviewed by the complainant, or where responses are not carefully considered by complainants and copied straight into AI chat-bots, misunderstandings or misinformation can be produced that prolong the complaints process and lead to unnecessary frustration and delays.

Despite these challenges, staff remain committed to conducting thorough and fair investigations and ensuring that all issues raised are fully considered. Complainants are therefore advised that current response times may exceed those set out in the complaints policy due to the increased volume of AI-generated correspondence to try and appropriately manage expectations. They are also advised that sending multiple emails about matters already under investigation will not expedite a response and may instead contribute to further delays. While complainants are always encouraged to raise any new concerns, this attempt to limit repetitive correspondence helps the complaint department manage complaints more effectively and maintain compliance with complaint-handling timescales, wherever possible.

Delays in accessing independent complaints advocacy services have also had an impact on ability to adhere to the timescales set out within our Complaints Policy. In some cases, complainants have required advocacy support before they are able to fully engage with the complaints process. Waiting times for advocacy services can therefore delay the progression of investigations, the agreement of complaint issues and the provision of formal responses. While these delays are often outside of the department's direct control, they can result in complaints remaining open beyond the prescribed timescales and contribute to overall performance challenges in meeting statutory deadlines.

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 previous years. 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.

Another factor causing delays in complaint investigations is the complexity of the complaints, particularly those that reach a formal stage. A significant proportion of complaints are highly detailed and involved multiple complex issues. During the reporting period, **45%** of

complaints covered multiple issues, which is an increase from the 41% 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, **9%** of complaints involved multiple teams within the local authority, a decrease from the 14% the previous year. Although there has been a slight decrease, it still must be acknowledged that some complaints necessitate co-ordination among various service managers, which can prolong enquiries and the investigation process for some complaints.

When evaluating compliance with timescales, we must also take into account the significant increase in complaint volumes during the 2022/23 reporting period. That year experienced 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 both 2024/25 and the last year, the overall number of complaints remains substantially higher than it was when the Welsh Government last reviewed the application of complaint timescales in 2014.

To address these challenges, we acknowledge that additional work is required to ensure compliance with the timescales outlined in our complaints policy. Therefore, we are looking to review our internal workflows with the goal of refining and accelerating our processes. We are currently collaborating with our regional partners to address the challenges of adhering to timelines to Welsh Government. This is due to mutual acknowledgement that similar issues have arisen across the region, and evidence that the landscape of complaints has changed dramatically since the introduction of complaint timescales in 2014. Additionally, we wish to explore ways to empower complainants to effectively use AI tools for clearer communication, while raising awareness of the limitations regarding inaccuracies and vexatious correspondence.

To support adherence to timelines at Stage 2, we continue to work to expand the pool of available independent investigators. This includes sharing information about both new and experienced investigators with local authorities across Wales, as well as exchanging insights into the quality of investigative work conducted, all while maintaining the confidentiality of complainants.

Additionally, we are considering how to address potential barriers related to the requirement for an enhanced DBS check registered with the Update Service. Although this is a requirement we have, Bridgend County Borough Council are currently unable to carry out DBS checks, which has created barriers for investigators who struggle to find an umbrella organisation. We are currently liaising with counterparts in other local authorities to try and resolve this issue.

Overcoming the above challenges would help ease the pressure on existing resources, support adherence to timelines 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 **84.8%** of complaints resolved informally during this reporting period (pre the complaints procedure). This is consistent with the 84% of complaints resolved informally in 2024/25. The high percentage continues to reflect the Directorate’s commitment to achieving early resolution for complainants.

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

You really are a marvel J 😊

Just wanted to give some feedback regarding K.

I have been a manager of a team for many years and over that time I have had a lot of experience of dealing with complaints.

Since K has been in post I can honestly say that dealing with complaints has been a much more positive experience. K provides support and direction to me as a manager and attending meetings with the complainant means that in most cases we are able to resolve issues together at an early stage. I feel I have learnt a lot from K about how to respond to complaints through her approach in these meetings which is always professional but also warm and empathic. She explains things to myself and complainants in an easy to understand way both verbally and in writing which I feel goes a long way in making resolution easier.

There have been some occasions over the last year in particular when I have had a number of complaints on the go at the same time but I have always felt supported by K. She has also given me the confidence to feel like I am able to deal with complex complaints and I feel she has enabled me to this part of my job better.

K always responds to emails and calls and my cries for help! She is the voice of reason and calm when I get frustrated over certain situations. She simply makes my job a lot easier.

We don’t often take time to appreciate our colleagues so I just wanted to take a bit of time to say how much I appreciate K and what a great job she is doing.

I have to say you are the most helpful person I've spoken to. Keep up the good work.

Thank you so much for your help, support and guiding me through the process, it was much appreciated at a difficult time.

Thank you. Just listening to our concerns, this means an awful lot to us. Dad came home this morning so just trying to reacquaint him with Mum and the bungalow. Once again thank you.

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 communication - **13%**
- Staff conduct - **13%**
- Lack of support - **12%**

Further information on themes can be found on Page 21 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.

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

The following complaints were upheld following independent investigation:

Children and Family Services

The Education Engagement Team did not keep any records of the meetings between the Education Engagement Team Manager and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Team Manager, despite the seriousness they had placed on the matters under investigation.

A professional complained about how the proposal for a potential professional concern meeting was communicated. The complainant expressed concerns that this information was shared before they received any formal notice regarding the discussion.

Adult Social Care

The complainant wrote to the former Chief Executive to share details about her personal tragedies in order to provide background context for her complaint. She specifically requested that this sensitive information not be shared as part of her complaint. However, her letter had been shared with the Complaints team, others involved in the Stage 1 investigation, and the Stage 2 investigating officer.

Complainant's standing frame therapy was stopped without notice or explanation, and no date was provided for when it will resume.

Between March and June 2025, the family contacted Bridgend Social Services for support in caring for their relative but were only provided with information on private care agencies and were not offered a carer's assessment.

The social worker did not complete a Carers Assessment for the complainant, preventing her from receiving the support and assistance she was entitled to.

Although there was an agreement in August to reassess the care and support needs of the complainants' mother, the reassessment was not completed until the following May.

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 2025/26 period, the Local Authorities' Corporate Complaints team received **1** complaint regarding Children and Family Services, specifically concerning a breach of GDPR. This breach involved a birth mother being informed of the personal details of prospective adopters. The Council Annual Complaints Report details this complaint, 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.

Themes of complaints received 2025/26	Total	Percentage
Lack of communication	37	13.31%
Staff conduct	37	13.31%
Lack of support	33	11.87%
Case management/review decisions	33	11.87%
Safeguarding concerns raised	20	7.19%
Delays	17	6.12%
Factual Inaccuracies/False Accusations	16	5.76%
Failure to act in a way the complainant believes council should have	14	5.04%
Request	12	4.32%
Other	11	3.96%
Breach of confidentiality	7	2.52%
Financial charging	6	2.16%
Issue with assessment	6	2.16%
Concern relates to an outcome from Court	5	1.80%
Removal/reduction of service	5	1.80%
Frequent changes of staff	5	1.80%
Direct Payments	3	1.08%
Quality of service	3	1.08%
Court order not followed	3	1.08%
Historic concerns	2	0.72%

Complaints regarding a lack of communication

As seen in Table 4, the joint-largest proportion of complaints received during this period (37 complaints) centred around a lack of communication. Complaints concerning communication included delays in responding to enquiries, failure to provide timely updates, and a lack of clarity regarding care planning and decision-making processes. These concerns often resulted in frustration and reduced confidence in the service. Efforts continue to focus on improving responsiveness, providing clear information and ensuring that people who are in receipt of services and their families are kept informed at all stages of intervention. The Complaints Manager regularly highlights service areas where communication has been identified as a recurring theme with the relevant service managers and senior leaders. This enables targeted learning and improvement activity to be implemented, supporting managers to address underlying issues and with the aim of enhancing the overall experience of service users and families.

Complaints regarding staff conduct

The other largest proportion of complaints received during this period related to the conduct of individual members of staff (37 complaints), which although high, is a slight reduction from the 41 complaints received regarding staff conduct in the previous reporting period. Complaints regarding 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, and are provided with details of how to also raise a concern separately, should they wish to do so.

Complaints regarding a lack of support

The second largest proportion of complaints received during this period 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, complaints regarding inadequate support varied widely. For example, one complainant expressed frustration over not receiving help to access medication while in prison, while another highlighted the lack of assistance for their husband in securing a place at a day centre for respite. Complainants, family members and advocates 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 during the reporting period was a lack of support for families with children who have behavioural difficulties or additional needs. These parents/carers expressed feeling isolated and unsupported in meeting their child(ren)s needs. Another recurring theme regarding support during the reporting period was complaints from young people in the care system / care leavers, who required support with finances, housing and health care.

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 safeguarding concerns

During this reporting period complaints were raised that highlighted safeguarding concerns, either entirely or in part of their complaint. Of these complaints; **12** related to Children and Family Services, while **5** were regarding to Adult Social Care.

In Children and Family Services, of the 12 complaints; 5 were referred directly to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or relevant social work teams due to ongoing safeguarding involvement, with detailed outcomes unable to be shared in some cases because of GDPR restrictions and complainant not holding parental responsibility. 1 complaint was referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and investigated under Part 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, although the outcome could not be disclosed as it related to a member of staff's personal information. 2 complaints progressed to Section 47 safeguarding investigations, and following this both progressed as formal complaints explaining the authority's actions and limitations. 1 complaint concerning a missing person was appropriately referred to the police; a subsequent complaint about this decision progressed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure and was not upheld. 1 complaint made by a young person regarding harm caused by his mother did not progress to investigation because he was no longer in her care and at risk of harm, although a related complaint remains at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. 1 complaint concerning social media content was considered under safeguarding procedures but did not meet the threshold for investigation, and this was explained to the complainant in response to their complaint. 1 further complaint relating fathers concerns with his child's welfare did not progress to investigation, but the information was considered as part of Early Help intervention work with the family.

In Adult Services, of the 5 adult services complaints received; 1 was considered under Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Part 5 and the Professional Concerns Process. The concerns were found to be unsubstantiated, with the outcome informed by a Coroner's Inquest, an internal provider investigation and subsequent review by the complaints and commissioning team. 1 complaint, submitted by the mother of an adult leaving prison, was considered jointly by Adult Safeguarding and the Early Intervention and Prevention Hub; however, the outcome could not be shared as the individual did not consent to his mother acting on his behalf or to social work involvement. 1 complaint related to an alleged criminal matter involving a care provider and was referred appropriately to the Police, while any potential risks to other residents were considered under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. 1 complaint concerning a private care home was also referred to Adult Safeguarding for consideration under Wales Safeguarding Procedures. 1 complaint related to safeguarding concerns arising from a reduction in services; however the support was immediately reinstated and complainants concerns were addressed through the assessment and review process.

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

- Fostering good working relationships between complaints officers, management and complainants. These working relationships allow collaboration between complaints officers and relevant managers to swiftly identify and agree on informal resolutions to issues raised.
- Facilitate meetings wherever possible between managers and complainants to encourage honest and open communication, which helps in understanding 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 practices and ensure consistency in handling complaints. This collaboration ensures that complainants receive fair and equitable treatment. For particularly complex cases, engage in collaborative problem-solving while maintaining confidentiality.

Communication with Complainants

- Providing complainants with clear explanations of the reasons behind decisions, both verbally and in writing.
- Maintain transparency by offering apologies when necessary.
- Identifying areas for service improvement and ensure that corrective actions are documented and followed up on.
- Offer reassessments when appropriate.

Advocacy Advice/Support and Independent Consideration

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

Quality Assurance and Improvement

- Collaborate with the councils 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 2025/26 were as follows:

Table 5

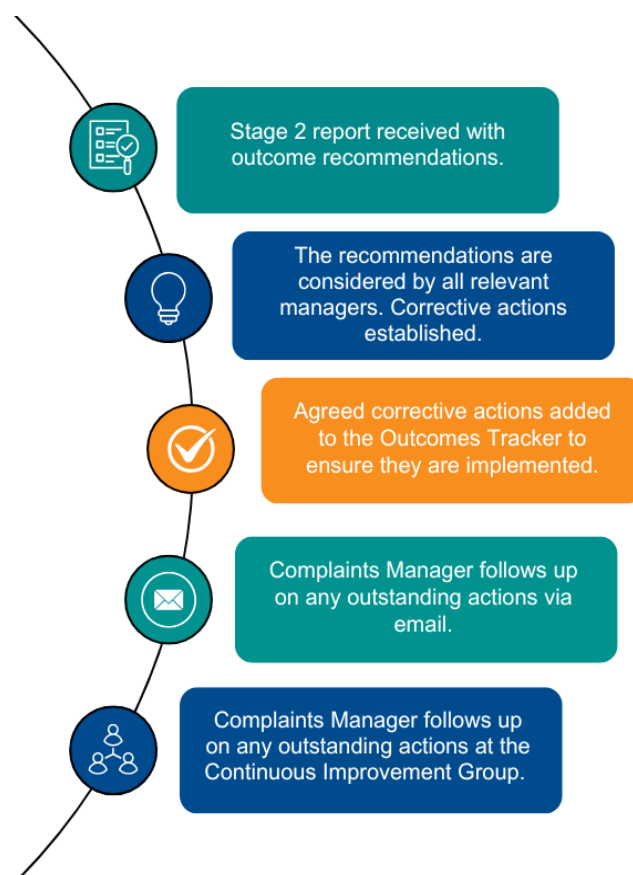
Team	Lessons Learned / Actions Implemented
ICNT East / Support at Home	The investigator recommended that the complainant receive apologies for all aspects of the complaint that were upheld, including any upset caused, as well as the time and energy she invested in pursuing the complaint. This was provided in the response to her complaint.
ICNT East	The investigator recommended that the local authority collaborate with the complainant to create a contract of expectations. This contract should outline the available care providers, support for transitioning to a new provider, effective communication methods, expectations for respectful interactions, a process for raising concerns, the minimum number of cares in her team, and the consequences of declining appropriately trained carers. Although we accepted this recommendation and attempted collaboration in the way the investigator recommended, the complainant chose not to engage with it pending legal advice.
ICNT East	The investigator recommended that the complainant's care plan be updated to specify how often she will receive assistance with showering. Following this, the care plan was updated to include the specific days when support for showering will be provided, ensuring clearer communication and managing expectations with the complainant moving forward.
ICNT East	The investigator recommended the local authority provide assistance to the complainant to recruit or commission standing frame therapy through direct payments. We agreed with this recommendation, acknowledging it would allow greater voice, choice, and control over the complainant's care arrangements. However, complainant declined the offer. Following this an alternative provider was sourced through the local authority.
EIPH	The investigator recommended that both the complainant and her mother receive apologies for all upheld aspects of the complaint. This includes acknowledging the upset caused, as well as the time and energy spent pursuing the complaint. Although some aspects of the complaint were not upheld, the investigator identified areas of communication and practice that could have been improved. We acknowledged this and offered a sincere apology for all elements of the upheld complaints.

EIPH	The investigator recommended that the complainant and her mother be given a copy of the assessment and care plan completed by the newly assigned social worker. The investigator recommended that these documents should be updated based on the feedback received from the complainant. After the complaint was made, this action was completed and complainant provided detailed positive feedback regarding the newly assigned social worker's involvement, which was later recorded as a compliment for the service.
EIPH	The investigator recommended that although the section on carers in the recent assessment completed by the social worker indicated that the complainant did not wish to have a further carers assessment, based on the findings of this investigation, the investigator suggested that the complainant be offered a new carers assessment. The complainant was offered a carers assessment. They were also informed that if they decided at any time that they would like a reassessment, they could contact the social worker, who would be happy to discuss the offer and explain the process.
EIPH	The investigator recommended that senior leaders ensure all practitioners working in the Early Intervention and Prevention Hub understand the legal obligation to proactively offer a carers' assessment. This should include guidance on how to communicate this offer in a way that is clear and comprehensible, particularly for those who may not have prior knowledge or understanding of what a carers' assessment entails. Following this recommendation, the Early Intervention and Prevention Hub conducted a workshop focused on understanding our duty to carry out carers' assessments. Additionally, the service worked on a project aimed at enhancing support for carers. The objective of this project was to improve the quality of service delivery by presenting information in a clear and understandable manner, especially for individuals who may not be familiar with what a carers' assessment involves.
EIPH	The investigator recommended that the practitioners involved in assessing the complainant's mother be supported in reflecting on and learning from this complaint, to focus on the experiences of both the complainant and her mother through workshops, as well as individual coaching and mentoring. This was completed and additionally, the service established a dedicated role for a Carers Assessment Social Worker, implemented enhanced auditing and monitoring practices, and integrated actions within the Carers Steering Group and training program.

Adult Social Care	The investigator recommended that the lessons learned from this complaint be shared with the leadership team within Adult Services, and that relevant insights are also disseminated across the service, focusing specifically on the experiences of those seeking help and support. Significant learning was derived from this complaint through staff workshops and targeted initiatives involving the staff directly involved in this complaint. Improvements were made such as established a dedicated role for a Carers Assessment Social Worker, the introduction of enhanced auditing and monitoring processes, and incorporated action plans into the Carers Steering Group and training programs. These action plans were subsequently reviewed during senior leadership and directorate quarterly performance meetings.
MASH / EET	The investigator recommended that the local authority establish a policy or protocol to be implemented immediately upon receiving a referral that involves a staff member. Since the complaint was made, the Children and Family Services, in collaboration with the Education Early Years and Young People Directorate, developed a clear joint protocol for handling referrals related to staff members.
MASH / EET	The investigator recommended that when a referral is received, only the minimum number of staff members be informed on a strict need-to-know basis. Following the investigation it was communicated to staff that only those directly involved in managing or responding to the referral will be notified, in accordance with data protection requirements and confidentiality principles.
EET	The investigator recommended that EET work closely with schools to ensure they fully understand the referral process when there are concerns regarding a member of staff. This includes the necessity of handling such information confidentially. Following the investigation the EET confirmed it will continue its collaboration with schools to clarify and reinforce the referral process in cases involving BCBC employees. Schools receive regular updates about these processes, which are incorporated into their safeguarding training. Each school has a designated education engagement coordinator who serves as a point of contact for safeguarding advice and guidance. The EET has emphasised the importance of maintaining confidentiality and sharing information appropriately. Furthermore, the EET reviewed and enhanced the training offered to schools. They will also continue to hold vulnerable group surgeries with schools and conduct annual safeguarding audits in partnership with them to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the referral process.

EET	The investigator recommended that EET ensure schools clearly understand the threshold for determining whether a referral is related to welfare or safeguarding concerns. Following the complaint investigation the EET confirmed they would continue to provide information, advice, and guidance to schools to help them better understand the appropriate thresholds for identifying referrals that qualify as welfare or safeguarding concerns. It was considered how this support must align with existing safeguarding guidance, procedures, and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Threshold Guidance. Additionally, a new regional threshold document has been shared with schools to promote consistency.
EET	The investigator recommended that EET consider how to accurately record the information and discussions within the BCBC record-keeping system. This will help provide evidence in case of future complaints regarding their actions. As the transition to a new case recording system is underway, EET will explore ways to effectively use this system to ensure that significant safeguarding information is recorded accurately and appropriately. The directorate is examining various management information systems to determine the best methods for capturing relevant information. In the meantime, EET is utilising the existing system for information sharing until the new system is implemented.

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 management meetings in both Adult and Children and Family Services. These groups, 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.

9. 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 15), **407** compliments were received during 2025/26 compared to 374 the previous year, a welcome **increase of 8.8%**. Please see a cross selection of the compliments received for 2025/26 in the table below:

Table 6.

Compliments - Adult Social Care:
I am so pleased that my mother has been given a flat in Ty Ynysawdre. She has been struggling for the past year or so and desperately needed more support. I had been trying to get a social worker for my mother since last July but was told that she wasn't a priority. She eventually was allocated a social worker after having a fall at home in December and ending up in hospital for two months. Once the social worker was allocated my mother got the extra support she needed as he was able to coordinate with other council departments, hospital, etc. And was instrumental in securing the extra care needed through the team at Ty Ynysawdre. Her move to her new flat has gone very well so far and the support given by all the staff has already improved hers and my own wellbeing.
I spoke to a lovely unpaid carer yesterday (the wife of L) and she spoke very highly of the service her husband receives from MRT. She said that the service is "fantastic" and that it works so well, and the staff are "wonderful".
M had relayed during my visit today "I would never be where I am now, without your support, your humour and way you just are, has been amazing. You don't judge" M was very complimentary , had a hug when I was leaving and shed some tears of thanks. I supported her to recall all the positives achieved, her journey so far and distance travelled, and reminded her to be kind to herself, keep thinking positively and moving forward with her life goals. Courtesy call to Daughter - explained ending my involvement. N was very complimentary "You've been great, we have not had such progress for years, you really built a relationship, thank you" I discussed remaining positive , expecting some blips in life , but focusing on progress and positiveness. Explained contacting for any future needs to Adult Social Services. Courtesy call to Sister "You have been a thorough support and guide" I relayed what a huge support O had been, and thanked her for this.
I wanted to write to you personally to say thank you for everything you've done for my father and for our family over the last 18 months. This has been such a hard and emotional journey for us, and through it all you never gave up. You stayed with my father's case, even when things were complicated or took longer than any of us hoped, and you kept going because you wanted to be sure it was right for him. That determination and care meant so much to us. You always took the time to listen and to really understand who my father is, not just what was written on paper. When we were tired, unsure, or overwhelmed, you helped us make sense of things and gave us the reassurance we needed to keep moving forward. Having someone we trusted so completely made all the difference. Because of your support and persistence, my father is now in a residential care placement that feels safe and right for him, and reaching this point has brought our

family a huge sense of relief. We honestly couldn't have got here without you.

On a personal level, I want you to know how grateful we are for your kindness, patience, and commitment. You handled everything with such humanity, and that will always stay with us.

Thank you for not giving up, for standing by us, and for caring so deeply about getting this right for my father.

Caring hands, gentle and true, we see the difference made by you, with patience, kindness everyday, you brighten hearts along the way, you've given dad safety and comfort, and given mum the chance to rest, for us as a family, that means so much, we cannot thank you enough, your work is not easy, yet you do it with such compassion. Please know that your efforts noticed, valued and deeply appreciated. From our hearts, thank you.

This was my first exposure to such a meeting and I was really impressed with the process. I would like to thank you both for the effort that you had clearly put into the various assessment criteria to come up with an appropriate score for Mum in each category. The blank set of questions that you provided to us had the criteria for each category and grades that was set out very clearly and were easy to follow. It was good to be part of the assessment process and to hear that sometimes yours and P's assessments were slightly different, because, after all, they are very subjective, and 2 pairs of eyes are better than 1! What I also liked was that you were discussing the outcomes with each other and asking for mine and my dad's thoughts too, which meant we certainly felt part of the assessment. Keep up the great work as I'm sure your caseloads are massive and we are both very happy with the outcome.

I just want to start by saying thank you to CDAT for the amazing work that has come from you guys to help me to get my life back. My life in addiction has been more than 20 years on and of the recovery road, since working with CDAT I first worked with Q and she was such a kind and caring soul of inspiration she helped me feel human she empowered me and helped me back to my feet I am forever grateful to her for her commitment and love for her job that shines out of her so brightly. I then hit a bump in the road and R was my saviour he came and held his hand out with his encouraging words or support and wisdom and I grabbed it with both hands. R has consistently supported me with no judgment and has gone above and beyond to help me to the road of recovery again he has been a rock when I have needed it he has consistently reminded me of my self-worth that is well lost when you're in a dark hole like I was he has helped my mental health by supporting me with home visits and supported me by bringing me to cooking group so I did not have to face it alone he has pushed and stayed by my side and I thank god for him he is the reason I am where I am I think this world would be a better place with more R's in it and I say that from knowledge of working on my recovery in other towns and cities all over the place in and out of Wales I don't even know how to thank R enough for the support he has given me I am truly humbled by his caring work I feel it that R is not just getting up to do a 9-5 he wakes up in the morning wanting to make a change in the world of addiction and I can hand on heart say that anyone that works with R that trusts in his process and takes his care and support on board will have a better shot at life and all that they have lost will be resorted I am now alive and living my life my children have a mother that is constantly present

and I have a life that is full of possibilities and full of opportunities to prosper. I know I have gone on and on here but honestly this is not even a little bit of how I feel right now due to the care and support I have received and like I say thank u soooo soooo much I am truly humbled and sooo grateful for having my life back. I am definitely scared to move on from Wales as I am relocating to live near family in England so if I do fall I will not have the support of CDAT again but I just know that I have a better life right now and I'll take each day as it comes I will live my life to the fullest make happy memories with my family and as I said will forever remember R for the rest of my life as the person that kept the faith in me and got me here with that big heart for recovery in people that he has. Thank you R wish you all the best and I hope you can continue to help people change their life for as many more years to come as possible and I also hope that if and when you do have to leave the role that people will take you as an inspiration to go by how they work too as you are fab 🤖

You'd make a good councillor, you're very calm and kind. Thank you for listening to me. Thank You, Thank you

You don't know how grateful I am for your call today, you've been very helpful, thank you for cheering me up, S

Compliments – Children and Family Services:

My worker is very kind when she comes to see me.

Could I note the following compliment from children noted during observation of T's practice for consolidation. The children noted the following.

During the session with T she did direct work with the children and focused on people being different animals and why. Afterwards the assessor for T asked which animal T would be and why.

They said T would be a panda (which is the same animal they picked for their kinship carer) as she listens, she's kind and does what she says she will.

T also had excellent feedback from her tutor observing her practice. T has had some excellent feedback and compliments lately in terms of her practice which has been so lovely to see!

I'm sure better people than me have told you this :- the new fostering team is second to none and we are very happy 🌟🌟

I am writing to inform you that the Minister for Children and Social Care has recently received a letter from foster carers within your local authority, praising the support and professionalism of members of the Bridgend County Borough Council fostering team.

The Minister was very pleased to receive such positive reflections, particularly the carers' comments about the dedication, child centred practice, and strong safeguarding ethos demonstrated by your staff. She has now issued a formal response to the foster carers acknowledging their feedback and thanking them for their continued commitment to fostering.

The correspondence specifically highlighted the excellent work of U, V and W. The Minister has asked that this praise be shared with the fostering team and their managers please. Given the significance of the work they undertake, it is great that their contribution has been recognised.

X has undertaken work to support a young man back into the care of his parents from foster placement. The situation was at risk of breakdown due to family relationships with Mum and Step Dad – lots of clashes etc. After working with X the placement is now stable to the point the family are looking forward to discharging the Care Order.

Mum's feedback was: "X has been absolutely amazing, she has supported us in everyway possible, she really has been a Godsend".

Just a quick one to say thank you for helping me with the forms, the work and patience you put in for me and helping me to reflect and change, the work with you I have benefited from more than anyone because you've seen I learn differently and adapted to me to help me understand and your very clear and put things into perspective, I have enjoyed our sessions with you and I have learnt a lot. Thank you so much

I am sat here crying actual tears of relief. I cannot thank you enough for all your help and support, you and Y have been invaluable and made me feel heard. In doing this it's going to take a huge weight off my shoulders, it will allow me to focus all my support on getting this little girl to where she needs to be. I will never ever give up on her.

I just wanted to highlight the positive feedback received during Z's RCPC this morning; A (mother) commented on how much support she has received from the support services involved. A said that B is an excellent social worker and goes through everything in detail. B's updates in the RCPC were thorough and easy to understand. It is apparent from the updates that B is very child focussed. Thank you, B!

10. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025/26

Promoting a Positive Complaints Culture

Through various management meetings and engagement with staff, the complaints team has fostered a positive attitude toward complaints as opportunities for learning and development. This initiative has clarified the complaints process and the roles within the complaints department, aimed to reduce defensiveness, and has promoted complaints as valuable opportunities for learning, growth and service excellence, thereby improving overall attitudes toward complaints.

Swift/Informal Resolution of the Majority 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 **2.3%** advancing to a formal independent investigation (Stage 2). This emphasises the effectiveness of early resolution approaches and highlights the commitment of teams to provide successful, local complaint resolution.

Embedding of the Most Significant Change (MSC) Approach

Last 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 enhances our understanding of service effectiveness and supports a more reflective, person-centred approach to service improvement and development.

Clear Service Improvement Through Complaint Outcomes

There have been targeted service improvements in Adult Social Care have focused on enhancing the understanding of the duty to proactively offer carers' assessments. Efforts have been made to improve clear and accessible communication and to ensure the consistent identification of eligible carers. In response to the learning from a Stage 2 complaint, the service implemented several initiatives: staff workshops, a dedicated Carers Assessment Social Worker role, enhanced auditing and monitoring processes and actions have been embedded within the Carers Steering Group and training program. These improvements resulted in greater staff awareness, better governance and increased consistency in service delivery. There is now a stronger emphasis on proactive, person-centred support, leading to an improved experience for both carers and those seeking help.

In Children and Family Services, an investigation findings highlighted the need to strengthen governance, maintain confidentiality and ensure consistency in handling referrals involving members of staff. Clearer guidance for schools regarding safeguarding processes and thresholds was developed in conjunction with the Education directorate. This joint-protocol reinforces a strict 'need-to-know' approach and enhances collaboration with schools through training, audits and ongoing engagement to improve understanding of referral processes and safeguarding thresholds. Improvements also focused on improvements to record-keeping, which supports accountability and transparency. Collectively, these actions enhance safeguarding practices, information governance, and the consistency of decision-making, ultimately leading to greater confidence in how concerns of this nature are managed.

10. OBJECTIVES FOR 2026/27

Improving the Management of Vexatious, Repeat and AI-Generated Correspondence to Support Timely Complaint Resolution

As touched upon earlier in this report, collaboration has already been initiated with Welsh local authorities to raise awareness with Welsh Government of the evolving complaints landscape, including the increasing volume of AI-assisted submissions and automated follow-up correspondence. In the year ahead, we would be looking to advocate for a review of existing statutory complaints timescales, in light of the growing challenges all councils face in meeting the current timescale requirements. The aim of this is to support the development of more realistic and achievable expectations for complainants, improve transparency and reduce frustration arising from delays beyond organisational control.

Another objective for the year ahead is to review or consider working guidance to support the council's Unreasonable Behaviour or Vexatious Complainant Policy to provide clearer guidance, enhance staff confidence and promote a consistent and proportionate approach to managing persistent or unreasonable communications. This will help minimise the disproportionate impact that a small number of complainants can have on service resources, enabling greater capacity to support the wider public more efficiently and effectively, which we anticipate will, in turn, support with adherence to complaint timescales.

A further objective for the year ahead is to work in partnership with BCBC's Digital and ICT teams to look at improving the structure and functionality of online complaint submissions. The aim is to introduce a redesigned form with clearer guidance and mandatory fields, to encourage focused and accurate complaint submissions, reduce the misuse of AI-generated content and improve the quality of information received. Uptake, effectiveness and impact will be monitored throughout the year to inform further improvements.

Further Promotion of a Culture of Learning and Continuous Improvement Through the Most Significant Change (MSC) Model

This year we are aiming to embed the Most Significant Change (MSC) model as a structured approach to capturing, reflecting on and learning from the experiences of complainants and the outcomes achieved through complaint resolution. By regularly identifying and sharing examples of meaningful change, this approach will strengthen organisational learning, highlight effective practice, and provide valuable insight into the real-world impact of our interventions.

This objective will support our current performance reporting and provide evidence-based service improvements. It will ensure that lessons learned from these insights inform future practice, and help shape services around the lived experiences of those we support, ultimately enhancing the quality, responsiveness and effectiveness of complaint handling across the organisation.

Expanding and Strengthening the Pool of Independent Investigators

Building on existing collaborative arrangements with neighbouring local authorities, we aim to explore new opportunities to recruit and develop a broader pool of suitably qualified Independent Investigating Officers. Increasing investigative capacity will help reduce pressure on current resources, support compliance with complaint handling timescales and provide greater flexibility in allocating investigations.

A larger and more diverse pool of investigators will strengthen the resilience of the complaints process, ensure investigations remain independent and impartial, and contribute to the delivery of high-quality, robust and timely outcomes for complainants and services alike.

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**

Appendix A:**Glossary of Terms and Acronyms**

Term / Acronym	Meaning
Active Offer (AO)	A statutory offer of independent professional advocacy made to eligible children and young people, particularly those who are looked after or involved in child protection processes.
Advocacy	Independent support that helps people express their views, understand their rights and participate in decisions affecting them.
BCBC	Bridgend County Borough Council.
BVC	Bridgend Voice & Choice, part of the commissioned advocacy service model in Bridgend.
Carers Assessment	An assessment carried out under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to identify the support needs of unpaid carers.
CDAT	Community Drug and Alcohol Team.
Child Protection Conference (CPC)	A multi-agency meeting held to consider concerns about a child's safety and determine whether a Child Protection Plan is required.
CLAR Review	Children Looked After Review. A statutory review meeting to monitor the care plan and progress of a looked after child.
Citizen Voice Body (Llais)	The independent organisation responsible for representing the views and experiences of people using health and social care services in Wales.
Corporate Complaints Procedure	The Council's complaints process for matters that fall outside the Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure.
CVB	Citizen Voice Body, operating under the name Llais.
Direct Payments	Payments made directly to eligible individuals to enable them to arrange and manage their own care and support services.
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service. Criminal record checking process used to assess suitability for certain roles.
EET	Education Engagement Team.
EIPH	Early Intervention and Prevention Hub.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation. Legislation governing the use, storage and protection of personal information.
IBA	Issue-Based Advocacy. Advocacy support provided to children and young people regarding a specific issue or concern.
ICNT	Integrated Community Network Team. A multi-disciplinary team supporting adults with complex health and social care needs.
Independent Investigator (IIO)	An independent person appointed to investigate Stage 2 complaints under the Social Services Complaints Procedure.
Independent Person (IP)	An independent individual appointed to oversee Stage 2 investigations relating to Children and Family Services complaints.

IPA	Independent Professional Advocacy. Statutory advocacy support available to eligible individuals.
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer. Responsible for independently reviewing care plans and safeguarding arrangements for children.
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer. Responsible for managing allegations against adults who work with children.
Llais	The operational name of the Citizen Voice Body in Wales, providing representation, information and advocacy support.
Local Resolution (Stage 1)	The first stage of the Social Services Complaints Procedure, focused on resolving concerns quickly and informally.
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. A partnership arrangement where agencies work together to assess safeguarding concerns.
Member Referral	An enquiry, concern or complaint raised on behalf of a constituent by an elected member, Member of Parliament or Senedd Member.
MSC	Most Significant Change. A qualitative evaluation approach used to identify and learn from examples of meaningful change and service improvement.
PSOW	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. An independent body that investigates complaints about public services in Wales.
RCPC	Review Child Protection Conference. A statutory meeting held to review the progress of a Child Protection Plan.
Social Care Wales	The regulator for the social care workforce in Wales.
Stage 2 Investigation	The formal investigation stage of the Social Services Complaints Procedure, undertaken by an independent investigator.
Statutory Complaints Procedure	The complaints process prescribed by Welsh Government regulations for Social Services functions.
TGP	Tros Gynnal Plant, an advocacy provider for children and young people.
Welsh Government Complaints Guidance	"A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services", which sets out statutory complaint requirements in Wales.

Meeting of:	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	10 SEPTEMBER 2026
Report Title:	SHARED LIVES SERVICE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CLLR JANE GEBBIE, CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING CLAIRE MARCHANT, CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	JOE BOYLE COMMISSIONING AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	This report provides the Committee with the additional information requested at their meeting on 9 July 2026 and to seek feedback on the proposal to introduce a banding system for payment to Shared Lives carers in Bridgend It is being proposed that the Shared Lives Service in Bridgend update its payments and funding model, to ensure carers allowances are sufficient to ensure the role allows for growth and sustainability in a key service area, whilst also ensuring individuals within the service are paying realistic contributions towards the cost of daily living.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the additional information requested at the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny meeting that took place on 9 July 2026, and to seek feedback on the proposal to introduce a banding system for payment to Shared Lives carers in Bridgend, prior to a report being presented to Cabinet later in 2026/27 seeking approval to implement the proposed changes.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Shared Lives (Adult Placement) Service provides individuals over the age of 18 an alternative form of care to more traditional care settings such as supported living or residential care. The Service provides care and support to individuals within a Carer's home in a homely, family environment. There are currently 16 individuals in long-term shared live placements, with 13 households (either single or couple carers) living in Bridgend County borough.
- 2.2 The Shared Lives Service also provides short-stay 'respite' support, where carers support people for a short period of time to allow the main carers to take time away from their caring role. (**Appendix 1** provides a copy of the full Carer Agreement that is signed between carers and the scheme management).
- 2.3 In Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), the Shared Lives Service is provided in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan (VOG) Council. The VOG run and manage the service, which is registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), on behalf of BCBC, and as such the service is called 'Vale of Glamorgan Shared Lives'. This partnership has been in place since 2019, taking over the provision and management of the service following several different management arrangements including internal provision and a previously commissioned external provider.
- 2.4 In March 2025, Cabinet approved the continuation of the VOG/BCBC Partnership Agreement for a further 5-year period, with an annual review of the arrangements to be overseen by a joint VOG/BCBC Shared Lives Project Board. Cabinet approval to continue the partnership also included the intention of identifying the best route towards a consistent banded payment system within the partnership.
- 2.5 In February 2026 Cabinet approved the commencement of public consultation regarding proposals to create a consistent service between BCBC and VOG based on a proposed Banding Structure. The consultation ran for a 12-week period from 30 March 2026 to 21 June 2026. Individuals supported by the Service and their carers were invited to 4 different consultation events (3 for supported individuals, supported by People First Bridgend with an easy read presentation, and 1 for carers) where the proposed changes were explained and discussed. A copy of the Consultation Document and the easy read Consultation Document is provided at **Appendix 2**, with a copy of the Shared Lives Service Banding Assessment Form/Structure provided at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.6 On 9 July 2026, a report was presented to the Committee following the public consultation and inviting Members to provide feedback relating to the proposed changes moving forward. The full anonymised feedback following the consultation is provided at **Appendix 4**.
- 2.7 At its meeting of 9 July 2026, the Committee noted the initial proposals and sought additional information from officers in a number of key areas (such as a review of Local Housing Allowance, detail of work linked to financial assessments/impacts, cost comparisons to other services, rationale for proposals and public consultation feedback), all of which is included throughout this report as set out in the following table.

Committee Recommendation	Section/Appendix of report
Detail of the work being undertaken by the Financial Safeguarding Team to include the impact of the proposed changes on individuals' disposable income and affordability	Section 3.12 onwards
Detail of all of the proposed changes to terms and conditions	Found in Appendix 1, Appendix 2 and Appendix 5
Full cost analysis of the cost of a Shared Lives Placement compared to alternative accommodation such as Supported Living, etc	Section 8.3
The rationale for aligning individuals' contributions to the same level as those in the Vale of Glamorgan who receive a higher level of Local Housing Allowance	Section 3.10 and Appendix 5
The outcome of discussions regarding a possible two-tier approach to ensure Band 1 carers are at no detriment	Section 3.5
Detail regarding how each carer and service user were consulted and how the impact on each was presented and explained to them and their responses	Section 2.5 and Appendix 4 and Full Equality Impact Assessment
The consultation paper and all anonymised responses to the consultation as an Appendix	Appendix 2 and Appendix 4
The Banding criteria as an Appendix	Appendix 3

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 Following the completion of the consultation, officers identified there was a need for amendments to be made to the initial proposal in order to mitigate the challenges, concerns and risks that had been identified through the public consultation process and feedback received from the Committee.
- 3.2 The following part of the report is in two sections: firstly, regarding the proposed adjustments to proposals for the carer banding allowances: and secondly, regarding adjustments to the proposals for individual contributions towards their rent, food and utility bills.

Carer Banded Allowance Rates

- 3.3 Initial concerns were confirmed through the consultation about the viability of the implementation of the Band 1 rate and the proposed reduction in total carer allowance per week. Three out of five of the Band 1 carers raised concerns about the reduction, with 2 of those asking if there was an option to remain on current rates, and 1 indicating they would need to stop providing Shared Lives care and support as it would not be financially viable for them to continue.

- 3.4 These concerns were reiterated and confirmed further by Members where the need for a 'no-detriment' approach was discussed to ensure there would be no detrimental financial impact on existing Band 1 carers. As such officers have undertaken further discussions, both internally and with VOG service partners, as to how this could be implemented.
- 3.5 A permanent 'no detriment' approach would result in two parallel pricing models for the same service thereby having inconsistent decision making and no universal framework. A proposed option would therefore be to put transitional arrangements in place and protect existing arrangements for those carers who would otherwise be adversely affected by the proposal. This would provide carers with a reasonable period of financial stability and certainty while allowing the new banding system to become established. Below is an example of a temporary protection 'no detriment' approach taken in fostering services:

Transfer of IFA Carers with Protected Payments

Attracting experienced foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) is a key mechanism for strengthening in-house fostering provision within a short timeframe. Nationally and locally, evidence consistently demonstrates that financial uncertainty is a significant barrier for carers considering transfer to a local authority fostering service.

The proposed transfer arrangements reflect a nationally recognised approach to foster carer transfer, supported by practice guidance developed by Foster Wales. The guidance promotes a no-detriment principle for transferring carers, underpinned by time-limited protection of existing payments. This approach is intended to support carers to transfer with confidence while maintaining financial sustainability for local authorities.

Under the proposed arrangements, eligible carers transferring from IFAs may receive temporary protection of their existing payment package, subject to defined criteria, time limits and review arrangements. This removes a key barrier to transfer, enables the authority to attract experienced carers, and increases in-house fostering capacity without the lead-in time associated with new approvals.

- 3.5.1 There are 4 options which are subsequently being considered following the consultation and feedback from the Committee. These are:

1. Implement the proposed banding system as consulted upon (see Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5).
2. BCBC set their own Band 1 rate at the current rate of carer allowance (£616.77) and implement a banding system with this as its starting point.
3. BCBC seeks another management arrangement or service delivery partner.
4. Implement a 'no-detriment' approach within the VOG/BCBC scheme where <u>existing</u> carers in Bridgend receive a 'protected' Band 1 allowance (possibly via a 'protection top-up' to the standard Band 1 rate), but all <u>new</u> band 1 placements are made in line with the proposed partnership

banded payment rates. This option would require consideration to be given to the duration of this transitional payment protection.

Options Appraisal

Option	Comment	Action Required
1	Option 1 does not mitigate the risk of losing carers from the service as it does not protect existing Band 1 carers from negative financial impact.	This is the simplest option to implement, as it will bring full consistency across the partnership. However, there is a high potential for the pool of carers to reduce in the short term, requiring a consolidated recruitment effort to regain lost capacity.
2	Option 2 would result in Bridgend Band 1 carers receiving a higher rate of allowance than others across the partnership.	Should this option be implemented, it could bring significant challenge to the viability and longevity of the partnership arrangement due to retaining differences and inequalities between carer allowance rates across the partnership.
3	For Option 3, BCBC has two choices: a) bring the service in-house, or b) seek another operational partner to manage the service on its behalf.	a) An internal service would need to be created which would come at significant cost to the Council through recruitment of management and support staff, registration processes with Care Inspectorate Wales, identification, registration and approval of an appropriate Responsible Individual, and continued ongoing recruitment and wellbeing events for existing and new carers. b) The South-East Wales partnership has been approached as part of ongoing service development considerations. This partnership also manages the services in RCT and Merthyr. However, as the largest partnership in Wales they have stated that they have no appetite or capacity at this time to include any other local authorities. The rates of pay are also lower than the VOG/BCBC proposal, which would not satisfy the need to protect payments in Bridgend.
4	Option 4 aligns most closely with the intentions of the partnership,	Option 4 will need to run two parallel pricing models for carers providing

	establishing a consistent banding system (see Appendix 5), but with a 'no detriment' protection for existing Band 1 placements in Bridgend.	the same level of service (one for protected placements, and one for new placements at standard banding rates). This option is viable in a similar manner to how foster carers have transferred to internal foster services from Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs), with protection of their rates of pay as outlined at paragraph 3.5. Further consideration is needed on the duration of the protection in order to mitigate the risk of carer loss following the end of any temporary protection of the existing rates. Consideration could be given to this transitional protection being in place for 2 years (24 months) for the existing long-term placements in Band 1 (of which there are 5 people), followed by a formal review thereafter taking account of the ongoing placement, the level of support required and any other relevant circumstances.
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- 3.6 **Appendix 5** report provides a banding rate comparison across Wales (and England), which places the proposed VOG/BCBC rates as the most generous service. Also, a detailed analysis of the changes from current fixed rate payments in Bridgend, to the proposed banding system is provided in **Appendix 5** by our Shared Lives partner in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 3.7 It is hoped that the proposed rates of payment for Shared Lives carers in the VOG/BCBC scheme will act as a recruitment incentive and support the Service in its aim of growing by 5 long-term placements per year. In order to do this, more carers must be recruited. More information on the target for annually increased numbers of placements can be found within the financial section of this report. .
- 3.8 Based on the above, it is proposed that Option 4 be recommended to Cabinet for implementation.

Individual Contributions

- 3.9 As part of the consultation, it was proposed that individual contributions (including rent and personal contributions) would be increased, in total, from £105 per week, to £197.08 per week. This was intended to better reflect the rising costs of food and utility bills which, in Bridgend, had not been passed on to the individuals supported through the Shared Lives Service.

- 3.10 In the VOG, individuals have been paying increased rates of individual contributions towards their food and utilities, where annual uplifts have been implemented, and so at this point, individuals supported by the same service in the two areas are contributing different amounts towards these costs.
- 3.11 Also in other care and accommodation services, such as Supported Living, the real costs of daily living are paid for by individuals living within those schemes. Typically, weekly costs to the individuals in supported accommodation, excluding rent, will vary between £115 to £135 per week per person to cover food, utilities and other daily living costs. On that basis, the people in Shared Lives placements in Bridgend, by paying the static £27.05 per week towards these daily living costs, have unintentionally been protected by an arrangement that has not kept up with the real costs of living, which is inequitable compared to other people with care and support needs.
- 3.12 One of the main themes from the consultation was about the affordability and scale of the proposed increase in Bridgend, which has led to a financial assessment being undertaken for all long-term placements details of which are provided below.

Financial Assessment findings

- 3.12.1 When a person receives a care and support service, they are invited to request a financial means assessment to calculate how much they need to contribute towards their care.
- 3.12.2 BCBC's Financial Safeguarding Team (FST) look at the person's weekly income, certain weekly outgoings and the person's "capital", which means savings, investments and, in some circumstances, property. Capital of less than £24,000 is disregarded. Outgoings include housing costs and any expenses the person has that is related to their disability. The FST works out:
- The total cost of the services the person receives (i.e. the cost of a Shared Lives placement), but they will not be charged any more than the maximum charge of £100 per week.
 - The person's disposable income (this is the money which our means assessment shows the person has left each week after allowances are made for day to day living costs and any costs relating to the persons disability)

The person will pay whichever of the above is the lowest amount.

- 3.12.3 The FST currently act as Appointee for 14 of the 16 people who are residing in the Shared Lives Service. An Appointee is legally responsible for managing a person's welfare benefits, reporting any changes that could impact on a person's claim, and to ensure spending of the benefit is in the persons best interests. As part of this role, the FST actively monitors each person's capital position to ensure that welfare benefits are claimed appropriately, which includes making new claims as and when necessary.
- 3.12.4 The FST has reviewed the impact of the proposed changes to the individuals for whom they act as Appointee. In most cases (11 of the 14) people have maximised

their welfare benefit entitlement and receive a level of benefits that allows them to continue living a good quality of life.

- 3.12.5 There are 3 people who cannot maximise their welfare benefits, as they currently have savings at a level that prevents them from doing this. These people currently have the financial means (i.e. sufficient savings) to be able to pay their increased contributions. Their capital balances are actively monitored by the FST, which ensures that benefits are claimed and maximised at the appropriate time, i.e. when their current level of savings reaches the threshold for claiming additional benefit income.
- 3.12.6 As such, all those under the Appointeeship of BCBC have sufficient means to pay for the increased contributions without creating a negative level of weekly disposable income. For those that will need to use their savings to make their contributions, their capital position is actively monitored by the FST, where additional benefit claims will be made at the appropriate time to ensure the person does not fall into a negative financial position as a result of their payments towards their service.
- 3.12.7 The two remaining individuals (for whom BCBC does not currently act as Appointee) have also had a financial assessment done, based on the same process of financial analysis as carried out by the FST for those who BCBC acts as Appointee. In both of these cases, there remains a positive level of disposable income each week, after accounting for the full level of increase needed.
- 3.12.8 In summary, all individuals either currently have sufficient income to afford the increased personal contributions without reducing them to a 'negative' weekly accrual of disposable income (or savings); or they will be actively monitored by the FST to ensure that their savings do not deplete beyond established thresholds.
- 3.13 Whilst the outcome of the consultation was general agreement to the principle and need for an increase to be made to the rate of this individual contribution, concern was raised as to the scale of increase for individuals to deal with in one go. As such, in response to these concerns, officers have identified an alternative that moves in the right direction but adds a level of protection.
- 3.14 In order to mitigate the sudden increase in contributions to match those paid in the VOG, it is recommended to implement a phased increase in the rent and individual contribution for food and utility bills as follows:

Year	Food and Utility Bill Individual Contribution	Rent	Total Contribution
2026-27	£27.05	£77.95*	£105.00
2027-28	£50.00	£92.05*	£142.05
2028-29	£90.00	£92.05	£182.05
2029-30	£105.03**	£92.05	£197.08**

*The rent is currently set at historical Housing Benefit rates but can be increased to match the LHA rates under the new system.

**It is proposed that annual increases/uplifts are applied to these rates from this third year in order to keep up with providing a realistic contribution to the cost of living.

- 3.15 Individuals supported through the Shared Lives Service are eligible for the 1 bed Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. These rates are calculated and determined by the national UK government (Department for Works & Pensions) and BCBC has no influence on the rates set. The LHA rates for Wales are attached at **Appendix 6**.

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

- 4.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out as part of the development of this strategy, policy or proposal and is attached as **Appendix 7**. The full EIA considers the impact of the strategy, policy or proposal on the nine protected characteristics, the Socio-economic Duty and the use of the Welsh Language.
- 4.2 Should the proposed recommendations be approved by Cabinet, the full EIA has determined negligible negative impacts, as mitigations will be implemented to ensure the current financial arrangements are maintained for existing Band 1 Carers, and also to phase the implementation of increased individual contributions. The increased individual contribution can also be viewed as a positive impact as this provides a more realistic contribution and is then equitable with others in different services.

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.

Involvement	Individuals, their family members, and their carers in the Shared Lives Service have been directly engaged with as part of the consultation and provided feedback. This feedback has been used to form this report.
Long term	The aim of these proposals is to create a single unified shared lives service, with consistent terms and conditions for individuals and carers across the partnership. This will in turn promote and support the expansion and development of the service by increasing the number of shared lives placements available.
Prevention	These proposals look to prevent inequity of terms and conditions of individuals and carers within the service by having consistent individual contributions towards their daily living expenses, and consistent carer allowances, regardless of if they are classed as Bridgend or the Vale. Expansion of the Shared Lives service itself can be seen as a way to prevent placing people into less appropriate or more restrictive care settings.
Integration	These proposals will be integrated across the Shared Lives partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan, and as an integrated element of supported accommodation options in Bridgend.

Collaboration	Officers from both BCBC and VOG have contributed and been involved collaboratively in the creation and development of the partnership and these proposals. External partners, including People First Bridgend, have also been part of the collaboration.
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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 The use of the Shared Lives Partnership supports the Council to fulfil its corporate safeguarding requirements by allowing for greater care to be provided to adults with additional needs. The proposal enables the Council to extend these duties through the provision of a fairer, more equitable and realistic service.
- 7.2 There are no Corporate Parenting implications from this report or its associated proposals.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 While cost savings are not the driver for the proposed changes, the implications for the Council include potential cost efficiencies through: a) rebalancing of contributions from supported individuals alongside the funding of Shared Lives placements by the Council; b) growing capacity in a cost-effective and outcomes-focused service model.
- 8.2 As mentioned in this report, the service has been set a target of growing by 5 long-term placements per year in Bridgend.
- 8.3 The Shared Lives scheme is a financially beneficial service to Council budgets. Comparative costs below show the weekly cost of different types of care settings (correct at the time of drafting).

Type of accommodation	Cost per placement per week
Specialist Residential Care (Learning Disability / Mental Health settings)	LD £4805.46 MH - £2851.34
Specialist Supported Living (Closer to Home)	£4052.27
General Supported Living	£2203.91
Standard Residential care (inc. older people)	£947
Shared Lives (under current proposed bandings)	£505.91 - £670.82

- 8.4 Over and above the individual placement costs, there is also an annual service management cost of circa £130,000 for operating the current Shared Lives scheme. Increasing the number of placements that are made into the Shared Lives scheme will also generate proportionate efficiencies within the service running costs.
- 8.5 For the purposes of comparison, the target of 5 new placements into Shared Lives is compared to the placement costs in General Supported Living:

	Individual Placement costs per week	Cost for 5 people per week
General Supported Living	£2203.91	£11,019.55
Shared Lives (Band 3 rate)	£670.82	£3,354.10

- 8.6 Should the target of 5 additional Shared Lives placements be achieved, whereas the alternative would be a Supported Living placement, this could equate to a relative cost efficiency of £7,665.45 per week for Adult Social Care budgets.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee review the contents of this report and provide comments on the recommendations being proposed to the Shared Lives Service to help inform Cabinet consideration in their decision making on the proposed changes to these areas.

Background documents

None

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**SHARED LIVES CARER AGREEMENT
(FOR VALE OF GLAMORGAN AND BRIDGEND COUNTY
BOROUGH)**

Date:

The agreement is made between the following:

Name:

Address:

(Herein referred to as the 'Shared Lives Carer')

And

The Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices,
Holton Road,
Barry.
CF63 4RU

(Herein referred to as the 'Council')

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

Section	Title	Page
1	Shared Lives Objective	5
2	Shared Lives Carer Agreement	5
3	Values and Principles	5
4	Responsibilities of Shared Lives Carer	7
5	Responsibilities of Shared Lives	18
6	Support and Monitoring Visits	21
7	Placement and About Me Plan Reviews	21
8	Shared Lives Carer Review and Supervision	21
9	Respite	22
10	Payments	22
11	Complaints	26
12	Notice	26
13	Breaches of Agreement	26
14	Safeguarding	27
15	Changing Needs and Circumstances	27
16	Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty	28
17	Variations	28

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

DEFINITIONS

Shared Lives Carer	Formerly known as an Adult Placement Host, a host is now known as a Shared Lives Carer. A person, who has received training in respect of care and support of adults with additional needs, in whose home an adult is or may be accommodated/supported and provided with personal care under the Placement Agreement.
Shared Lives Service	Formerly known as the Adult Placement Service, the service is now known as Shared Lives. The scheme operated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, under which arrangements are made or proposed to be made for not more than four adults to be accommodated and provided with personal care in the home of a person who is not their relative.
About me Plan	A written plan produced by Shared Lives Service, the relevant adult, and other relevant persons to reflect how a person's assessed needs and outcomes can be met.
Care and support Plan	The written plan drawn up by the Case Manager following an assessment of the person's needs and personal outcomes. The Care and Support Plan specifies outcomes to be achieved, resources and services to be provided, the allocation of responsibilities and arrangements for monitoring and review.
Case Manager	The professional responsible for working with the person and their support network in identifying their needs and personal outcomes and coordinating any required services.
Emergency Placement	A temporary placement made at short notice that lasts for no more than 28 consecutive days.
Individual Placement Agreement	The individual arrangement on behalf of the person in receipt of the service arising from an assessment of their needs and personal outcomes. This encompasses the Care and Support Plan and About me Plan, and any other written arrangements in respect of the Individual.
Long Term Placement	A placement of more than one year in duration.
Adult Placement Service Regulations 2019 (Wales)	Regulations issued by Welsh Government under RISCA (Regulation & Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
Placement	An arrangement whereby an adult is accommodated in the home of a Shared Lives Carer
Individual/Person/Citizen	An adult who may be or is accessing services provided by Shared Lives.
Respite Placement	Short term break from a caring/support role.
Short Term Placement	A placement of more than 28 days but less than one year in duration.
Variation	Any changes made to this agreement or to the services provided in accordance with clause 17 of this agreement.

1. Shared Lives Objective

1.1 To provide long term, respite or sessional placements to adults aged 18 years or older, who may be younger adults or older persons with needs arising from a learning disability, physical disability, mental health, sensory impairment, dementia or frailty, in ordinary family settings, according to the individual assessed needs. Emergency Placements will be considered and provided if safe and appropriate to do so.

1.2 The principal objective is the provision of high standard accommodation and/or support, which may include personal care. The physical and emotional welfare of people is of paramount importance.

2. Shared Lives Carer Agreement

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

2.1. Shared Lives Carer Agreement provides clarity of expectations and individual roles; this allows for consistency and effective management of placements provided by Shared Lives.

3. Values and Principles

3.1. All parties to this agreement subscribe to the following broad framework of values and principles as laid down in the Adult Placement Service Regulations (Wales) 2019 and Social Care Wales Code of Professional Practice for Social Care.

3.2. Every Individual has a right to:

- Have their cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual, social, creative, and emotional needs recognised and respected.
- Live an ordinary life in their community while staying healthy and safe.
- A person-centred enabling approach in delivery of support to individuals, taking into account the Individual's wishes, feelings and aspirations.
- A flexible and responsive service based on a person's needs, choices and preferences within the resources available.
- Involvement in the planning and delivery of their care and support
- Be treated with dignity and respect.
- Have their independence promoted by focusing on their skills and abilities and be as self-directing as possible in all areas of their life.
- Have information about the objectives of this scheme and be made aware of other supportive services.
- Have confidentiality safeguarded. All information about their care and support, personal life and their family must always be treated as strictly confidential. Shared Lives Carers must not disclose any personal information about individuals to a third party unless this has been agreed with the individual concerned and if they have capacity to do so. Agreement to disclose information should only be sought if this is for the benefit of the individual for the purpose of assisting with their support.
- Be involved in a careful and thorough assessment of their needs and wishes, and to be kept informed of the outcome. The requirements of individuals in relation to risk taking and safety will be agreed in their Care and Support Plan, About Me Plan, and on their Risk Assessment.

3.3. Have opportunities regarding:

- Social inclusion
- Develop and maintain friendships, personal and sexual relationships.
- Religion and culture
- Maintaining contact with their family
- Their first language
- Using local community facilities
- An environment free from abuse/discrimination
- Maximising independence and move-on
- Choice

3.4. Shared Lives operates on an equal opportunities' basis, rejecting discrimination or an individual being treated differently on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, religion, language, or nationality.

3.5 Any service complaint should be drawn to the attention of the Registered Manager immediately.

4. Responsibilities of Shared Lives Carer

General

The Shared Lives Carer shall:

- 4.1. Use their own home to provide 24-hour care and support in the case of long term, short term, or emergency placements. In the case of additional support, they will use their own home to provide support as per the Individual Placement Agreement.
- 4.2. If the home is rented, acquire the written agreement of the landlord to provide accommodation and support from the premises.
- 4.3. Support and enable the individual placed with them to be valued as an equal and contributing member of their household.
- 4.4. Work in accordance with the aims and values of Shared Lives and the assessed needs detailed in the individual's Care and Support Plan and About Me Plan.
- 4.5. Always maintain compliance with the Policies and Procedures of Shared Lives Service.
- 4.6. Comply with the recommendations and conditions of Shared Lives approval and review panel.
- 4.7. Comply with the Adult Placement Service Regulations 2019.
- 4.8. Explain those Policies and Procedures to the Individual/s placed with them when relevant and appropriate to do so.
- 4.9. Work to the Code of Professional Practice for Social Care.
- 4.10. Ensure the health, safety and welfare of themselves, family members and any Individuals residing with them.
- 4.11. Work in partnership with Shared Lives procedures for the matching and introduction of Individuals when a prospective placement is being considered.
- 4.12. Not accept referrals for the provision of Shared Lives through any other agency or private referral, except with the written agreement of Shared Lives. This includes requests made directly and indirectly by:
 - 4.12.1. Other approved Shared Lives Carers for short term, short break, and emergency placement, with or without payment.
 - 4.12.2. Other agencies to provide supported living/accommodation and/or care to vulnerable adults from Shared Lives Carers own home, with or without payment.
 - 4.12.3. Other agencies to provide Direct Payments services to vulnerable adults from their own home.
- 4.13. Only accept an individual for a new placement if they believe that they are able to meet the individual's assessed needs and personal outcomes.
- 4.17. Accept a person for an emergency placement only if they have been given an Emergency Care and support plan or referral form, which provides adequate information about the person's needs in advance of the placement proceeding.
- 4.18. Alert Shared Lives if within 5 working days of the beginning of the emergency placement the above documentation has not been provided and a meeting held.
- 4.19. Enter into a Licence Agreement with individuals in long or short-term placements, prior to the placement starting.
- 4.20. Provide support and/or care to the individual as detailed in the person's Care and Support Plan, About Me Plan and Individual Placement Agreement.
- 4.21. Promote the independence of people in all aspects of their lives.
- 4.22. Work positively with Shared Lives and other professionals to promote and plan move-on for people.
- 4.23. Identify and report any changes to Shared Lives or other relevant professionals, in the needs and personal outcomes of the person placed with them, in particular any unmet needs outside Shared Lives Carer's control.

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

4.24. Take full regard of all risk assessments undertaken in respect of the Individual and inform Shared Lives immediately of any additional risks for the Individual that they identify and for Shared Lives Carer or their family.

4.25. Support and care for the Individual always with respect and dignity.

4.26. Inform the individual about planned visits by Shared Lives and where appropriate other regulatory or investigating bodies such as Care Inspectorate for Wales.

4.27. Must discuss with and obtain agreement from Shared Lives for any arrangements for regular or occasional support for an Individual when a Shared Lives Carer is not available. If agreed, these arrangements will be recorded in the About Me Plan.

4.28. Provide information when requested about any person identified to provide support and/or care in a Shared Lives Carer's absence, so that appropriate checks and references can be taken up.

4.29. Fulfil their responsibilities as being self-employed for Tax and National Insurance purposes, including maintaining up to date records of income and expenses as required by HMRC. Shared Lives Carers should consult HMRC information on qualifying care relief.

Confidentiality

4.30. The Shared Lives Carer shall ensure that all information and records about the individual are kept confidential in line with the Council's policies and procedures, and access only allowed to those people with valid reasons for example medical personnel, health and social service staff.

4.31. The Shared Lives Carer shall ensure that all information and records about the Individual are maintained, accurate and up-to date. The personal file of the Individual shall contain the information required in the Regulations.

4.32. In addition to the Individual's personal record, will keep any other records as directed by Shared Lives.

Record Keeping

4.33. The Shared Lives Carer shall keep all the Individuals financial records for a period of seven (7) years, including the current financial year. If the placement ends before the seven years, the financial records should be returned to Shared Lives service.

4.34. The Shared Lives Carers shall keep the current Individual Placement Agreement until the end of placement.

4.35. All other records will be kept by the Shared Lives Carer for a period of three (3) years. This includes reviews and medication records. Unless the placement ends then the records should be returned to Shared Lives.

4.36. At the end of three (3) years, the Shared Lives Carer will return the records to Shared Lives for destruction.

Notifiable Events

4.37. A Shared Lives Carer shall be responsible for notifying Shared Lives, or Emergency Duty Team if outside office hours, immediately and confirm in writing, if any of the following occur:

- The death of any Individual
- Any notifiable infectious disease
- Any serious injury, or illness of an Individual

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

- Admission to hospital of an Individual
- Any safeguarding concern
- Appoint a suitable person to notify Shared Lives or the Emergency Duty Team in the event of serious injury/illness, hospitalisation or death of Shared Lives Carer.
- Any theft, burglary, fire or accident which affects the Individual.
- Any circumstance where the Individual has refused the provision of a commissioned service.
- Criminal activity by the Individual
- Any complaints/compliments made by an Individual or complaint/compliments made on his/her behalf.
- Any allegation against a Shared Lives Carer or any other person providing support to the Individual at a Shared Lives Carer's home.
- Any criminal conviction of a Shared Lives Carer or member of the household, or family member where they are regularly in contact with the individual.
- Any proposed change of accommodation
- Any change in composition of the household
- Any other changes in circumstances, such as the health, DBS status or new members of a Shared Lives Carer's household
- Any other circumstances that may affect the placement, including changes to a Shared Lives Carer's relationships, new members or new pets with the household (whether on a temporary or permanent basis).

4.38. The Shared Lives Carer will complete the appropriate accident and incident forms immediately. Copies of these forms are provided with the Carer starter pack.

4.39. In addition, the Shared Lives Carer will notify Shared Lives as soon as practicably possible of any proposal to have time away from their role as a Shared Lives Carer.

4.40. Failure to provide any of the above will be dealt with under Clause 13 of this Agreement.

Health Care and Medication

4.41. Adhere to the Local Authority's Medication Policy and Shared Lives procedure: administer, store and record medication as detailed on the About me Plan if required.

4.42. The Shared Lives Carer, as necessary, shall assist Individuals to register with the normal community health facilities including the General Practitioner (GP) and dentist of their choice (assuming the agreement of the GP and the dentist).

4.43. Individuals shall be assisted to visit the GP when required. Depending on the Individual's need they may be dependent upon the Shared Lives Carer to monitor their health and arrange appointments on their behalf.

4.44. The Shared Lives Carer shall assist Individuals to access other medically related services such as chiropodist, optician, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, hospital outpatient as required.

4.45. If an Individual is admitted to hospital, the Shared Lives Carer will ensure, in consultation with Shared Lives, that the person receives support whilst there, such as would be provided by a caring relative in line with Shared Lives' protocol on hospital admissions.

Hospital Admissions

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

4.46. If an Individual falls ill suddenly or has an accident, the Shared Lives Carer will seek immediate medical assistance and accompany the Individual to the GP or Emergency Department.

4.47. It is the responsibility of the hospital to ensure that the Individual is adequately supported whilst they are in hospital.

4.48. The Shared Lives Carer would be expected to provide support to the individual whilst in hospital, ensuring they have everything they need during their stay.

4.49. The Shared Lives Carer is required to supply all necessary information regarding the Individual to hospital staff, this must include medication information and the Individuals Health Profile.

4.50. The Shared Lives Carer is required to inform Shared Lives of any admission to hospital. The Shared Lives Carer will maintain links with the Case Manager, individual and hospital to plan for a safe discharge.

Smoking, Vaping, Alcohol and Drugs

4.51. Where a Shared Lives Carer or a member of their family smokes or vapes, they should consider the impact of this on the Individual and discuss with the Individual and Shared Lives service how they will remove any risk of second-hand smoke or vape to others.

4.52. Discussion on whether smoking or Vaping is acceptable or not within a Shared Lives Carer's household should be discussed and agreed as part of the matching process. If a Shared Lives Carer does not smoke/vape but is prepared to provide an arrangement for an Individual who smokes/vapes, such arrangements will be recorded in the Individual Placement Agreement and About Me Plan.

4.53. The Shared Lives Carer will not smoke/vape during any visit by Shared Lives staff, an Individual's Case Manager or any other professional in relation to the placement.

4.54. Information regarding 'house rules' on smoking, vaping or drinking will be given to the Individual as part of the matching process, prior to the placement commencing and recorded in the Individual Placement Agreement.

4.55. The Shared Lives Carer will ensure that, when supporting the Individual, their consumption of alcohol is limited so as they are in full control and able to respond should an emergency arise. If a Shared Lives Carer is found to be under the influence of alcohol while supporting or caring for an Individual, the risks in the situation will be assessed and suitable alternative care arrangement made. In certain circumstances this could result in the immediate end to the placement and an enquiry into the Carers future suitability.

4.56. Any circumstances of where these requirements are not adhered to will be dealt with under clause 13 of this Agreement.

4.57. The illegal use of drugs anywhere within the service will be reported to Shared Lives, who will in turn report it to the Police.

4.58. Where an individual is in a drug recovery programme that involves the use of controlled drugs such as methadone this will need to be under the supervision of an appropriate health professional and detailed in the About Me Plan and Individual Placement Agreement

Transport

4.59. All vehicles owned by a Shared Lives Carer and used for the safe transportation of Individuals must be maintained in a safe state and according to manufacturer's

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

recommendations. All vehicles must be properly taxed and insured for business purposes.

4.60. Seat belts or specialist harnesses, complying with legal requirements must be available for all Individuals carried as passengers and every precaution must be taken to ensure that Individuals make use of the belt/harnesses provided.

4.61. All drivers of vehicles used for transporting Individuals must have passed a driving test and possess a valid current driving licence appropriate for the vehicle.

4.62. The Shared Lives Carer will provide transport for the Individual to and from activities and daytime opportunities as agreed in the Care and support Plan and About Me Plan and will be paid mileage where it is confirmed in the Individual's Shared lives Agreement.

Training

4.63. Training requirements will be identified by Shared Lives as part of a training programme which includes all mandatory training and training which is specific to meet a person's needs. Shared Lives will provide training opportunities in a variety of ways – e-learning, face to face, reading material and peer discussion groups. All Shared Lives Carers are required to attend training as specified by the service. Failure to do so may affect their approval status. Consideration of training required and undertaken will form part of Shared Lives Carers supervision and review.

Personal Relationships

4.64. Individuals may wish to form friendships both in their home and outside and the Shared Lives Carer will provide the appropriate help in this process.

4.65. Individuals may wish to form relationships of a more personal and intimate nature. As long as both parties share the same wish, taking into account capacity to consent of both Individuals, then this should be facilitated. Appropriate support and advice should be provided (using where appropriate, external agencies such as sexual health clinics, GP, health colleagues).

4.66. The Shared Lives Carer shall recognise that individuals have the right to enjoy platonic and sexual relationships. Sexual expression may vary in its importance between individuals and should be respected regardless of sexual orientation.

4.67. Individuals also have the right not to engage in sexual relationships and a Shared Lives Carer must protect individuals from sexual harassment. Where it appears that any relationship might be of an abusive nature, this shall be brought to the attention of Shared Lives immediately.

4.68. Where a Shared Lives Carer has any doubts regarding Individual's relationships and/or capacity they must contact Shared Lives for advice.

4.69. Individuals' visitors shall be made welcome to the Individuals' home. Any concerns regarding these visits should be reported to Shared Lives as soon as possible. Any overnight visits must be discussed and agreed between the Shared Lives Carer, the Individual and Shared Lives prior to the visit taking place.

4.70. Individuals shall be enabled to go out with visitors if they wish, with the appropriate level of support where necessary.

4.71. Individuals' rights to refuse to see visitors must be respected and, if requested, the Shared Lives Carer must indicate the Individual's decision to the visitor. The exception relates to Officers of Shared Lives or other professionals.

Behaviours of Concern

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

4.72. When faced with episodes of behaviours of concern the Shared Lives Carer shall inform Shared Lives, who will work together, along with other professionals to seek to understand the reasons for the behaviour and ensure that they are offering the Individual sufficient personal support, both practical and emotional.

4.73. The Shared Lives Carer will engage with Shared Lives as to appropriate methods of dealing with significant and/or regular instances of behaviour of concern, including referral to specialist services for advice and support. These specialist services will offer training and guidance in positive behavioural support.

4.74. All episodes of behaviours of concern shall be recorded on an incident form or other agreed method, including details of the situation prior to the episode, those persons present, of the episode itself and the actions taken to deal with it. This will be shared with Shared lives and other relevant professionals.

4.75. The Shared Lives Carer will ensure that an Individual is not subject to physical restraint unless there is an immediate threat to life, or it is prescribed and written up by a health professional as part of a Positive Behaviour plan.

4.76. In no circumstances shall a Shared Lives Carer subject the Individual to any intervention that would be considered unlawful, cruel, unreasonable, or undignified if applied to another adult.

Death of an Individual

4.77. Ideally, an Individual who is dying should be enabled to remain in his/her home if they wish to do so unless there are medical or social reasons that prohibit this. The Shared Lives Carer must be prepared to provide support for an Individual in the final stages of life. The needs of an Individual who is dying, their relatives and other Individuals residing with the Carer must be handled sensitively.

4.78. Shared Lives shall be informed of the Individual's condition who will give appropriate support and advice.

4.79. Arrangements following death will be made by Shared Lives. The next of kin of the deceased Individual has responsibility to ensure that both registration of death and funeral arrangements are made. If there are no relatives willing or able to make these arrangements and underwrite their costs, Shared Lives shall make the necessary arrangements.

4.80. The Shared Lives Carer shall ensure the property of the deceased is protected. Shared Lives shall liaise with the next of kin regarding the removal of the deceased persons personal property.

Personal Financial Management

4.81. Individuals shall be encouraged and assisted to manage their own financial affairs. Where appropriate, terms for dealing with an Individual's financial affairs shall be agreed with the Individual or their duly appointed representative and detailed in the About Me Plan and subject to regular review. In all instances the Shared Lives Carer shall keep full and thorough records (to which Shared Lives shall have access) relating to the Individual's financial transactions. If the Individual requires assistance with the use of cash cards the level of intervention required will be detailed in the About Me Plan and reviewed regularly.

4.82. The Shared Lives Carer may not act as Attorney, Deputy or Appointee in accordance with Service Providers and Responsible Individuals, Wales Regulations 2019.

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

4.83. Where an individual has been assessed as lacking capacity to manage their finances the Shared Lives Project Worker will liaise with the Individual's Case Manager to ensure that a Financial Appointee, Attorney, or Deputy is in place.

4.84. The Shared Lives Carer shall assist the Individual to open a Bank or Building Society Account of their choice. The Individual's bank account must not be in a joint name with a Shared Lives Carer. The Individual's money must not be deposited into a Shared Lives Carer's own bank account.

4.85. The Shared Lives Carer shall assist Individuals to manage receipt of benefit payments.

4.86. If requested, the Shared Lives Carer shall arrange for the safekeeping of an Individual's money and valuables and shall maintain a record of deposits and withdrawals, countersigned by the Individual if they have the capacity to do so. The Individual must be allowed easy access to such items.

4.87. Where they are aware, a Shared Lives Carer must notify the Case Manager in advance when the Individual wishes to spend over £250.00 (two hundred and fifty pounds), even when the Individual has the financial wherewithal to spend the amount concerned, unless it is specified that this is not required for that individual. This may have to be done in retrospect if an individual makes an online purchase without prior discussion with the Carer.

4.88. All records regarding the Individual's monies and income shall be open to inspection by the Individual, Case Manager and any other officer of Shared Lives.

4.89. The Shared Lives Carer will not become party to any financial transactions with the Individual without the prior agreement from Shared Lives.

4.90. Any dispute regarding monies due from Individuals shall be referred to Shared Lives.

4.91. The Shared Lives Carer shall not borrow money from the Individual or ask them to enter into any financial transaction or arrangements on their behalf.

4.92. The Shared Lives Carer shall ensure that Individuals are made aware of their responsibilities regarding the safekeeping of his/her valuables and monies and will make the case manager aware of any concerns with regards to this. An inventory shall be kept of Individual's valuables and possessions.

4.93. The Shared Lives Carer or any person connected with them shall not become executors of or witness to an Individual's will or any other legal document.

4.94. The Shared Lives Carer and family members will not accept gifts or money from the Individual or their family, other than small token presents such as those given at birthdays or Christmas. Examples of token gifts include a box of chocolates, a bottle of wine, a bunch of flowers of a price no more than £10. Project workers must be consulted where the Carer intends to support the purchase of a token gift. Any concerns regarding the regularity or nature of a gift should be raised with Shared Lives immediately.

4.95. The Shared Lives Carer will advise the Individual whether their personal items and effects are insured under their home insurance. If not, the Shared Lives Carer will advise and support where necessary to take out an insurance policy to cover them.

Holidays

4.96. Where an Individual is to be included in a family holiday with their long-term Shared Lives Carer, holiday arrangements should be discussed with the Individual, Shared Lives, and the Case Management team. A Holiday Planning Form will need to be completed prior to the holiday being booked. Where an Individual may lack capacity, Shared Lives will liaise with the Case Management team, to agree a decision

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

made in his/her best interest. If all agreed, the cost of the holiday should be divided equally between all parties.

4.97. Risk assessments need to be completed where appropriate.

4.98. If an Individual expresses a wish to go on their own holiday, but would require support to do so, the Individual should pay the cost of their own holiday and the cost of the holiday for one long-term Carer to accompany them. In instances where the Individual cannot be supported by the long-term Carer and requires support from another Carer, the Individual should pay the cost of the Carers holiday and the respite allowance rate per night for the duration of the holiday. A Holiday Planning form needs to be completed prior to the holiday being booked and agreed with Shared Lives and the Case Management team. Risk Assessments need to be completed where appropriate.

The Shared Lives Carers Home

The Shared Lives Carer will:

4.99. Be responsible for the maintenance of their home both externally and internally, and for maintaining good decorative order.

4.100. Provide a homely, comfortable, and safe environment, in which an individual has their own private bedroom. The bedroom will have good quality furnishings and fittings, including a bed, wardrobe, chest of drawers, bedside cabinet, and a chair. All bedding, towels, curtains, and carpets will also be provided – unless specifically chosen or required by the individual.

4.101. If an Individual wishes to purchase furniture or furnishings, this should be done with the agreement of Shared Lives. The furniture will move with the Individual on change of placement.

4.102. Ensure that furniture and furnishings provided by them at their home are in a safe and usable condition and comply with the relevant legislative safety provisions including the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988.

4.103. Keep all gas and electrical equipment which has been provided by them in good and safe working order (including replacing where necessary) and arrange an annual Gas safety check to comply with all legislative safety provision, including (without limitation) the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. Appropriate certification will need to be made available for inspection by Shared Lives.

4.104. Provide and maintain in good repair adequate fire/smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector and replace the same where necessary, in accordance with recommendations.

4.105. Any acts of deliberate damage should be reported to Shared Lives and where appropriate reported to the police. If reported, a crime number must be requested and noted. An Individual may be recharged for the cost of the repair by agreement with the case manager.

4.106. Carry out any repairs as a result of damage or neglect to the property, fixtures or fittings.

4.107. Support a representative of Shared Lives to carry out internal and external inspections of their home as part of the annual review.

4.108. Where applicable, ensure that the owner of the property maintains buildings insurance for the home to an adequate level of cover and shall produce evidence of such cover to Shared Lives as part of the approval and annual review process.

4.109. If emergency repairs are required on their home, the Shared Lives Carer should ensure these are done in a timely manner.

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

4.110. At all times comply with all statutes, regulations, by laws and other requirements relating to fire precautions and means of escape in the event of fire.

4.111. Have in place a 'fire plan' that ensures all people are acquainted with the procedures to be followed in case of fire – support required will be detailed in the individuals About Me Plan.

4.112. Ensure that an external assembly point is identified and is explained to and understood by all members of the household.

4.113. Ensure that all escape routes are known, unobstructed and free from trip hazards.

4.114. Know the means of raising the alarm in the event of fire.

4.115. Know how to call the fire brigade in the event of fire.

4.116. Be responsible for the installation and servicing of any smoke detectors as required and instructed by the manufacturer.

4.117. Regularly check that fire appliances are in good working order, including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Meals and Refreshments

The Shared Lives Carer will:

4.118. Provide all meals or access to cooking facilities and refreshments for Individuals.

4.119. Individuals are expected to purchase their own meals and refreshments when eating out or attending social events.

4.120. Where there is an agreement in place for a Carer to provide additional support sessions Individuals will pay for their own meals and refreshments. The individual Placement Agreement will stipulate whether it is deemed appropriate for the individual to also pay for the meal/snack of the Shared Lives Carer.

Move-On

4.121. The Shared Lives Carer will actively support an Individual who wishes to move on or is no longer able to live in the placement for whatever reason. The Shared Lives Carer will work with Shared Lives and others to promote move-on and facilitate this process.

5. Responsibilities of Shared Lives

General

Shared Lives shall:

5.1. Provide services that comply with Adult Placement Service Regulations (Wales) 2019 and ensure that through training and explanation, the Shared Lives Carer understands and fulfils their responsibilities to be compliant with them.

5.2. Assess the ongoing fitness, integrity, and good character of Shared Lives Carer.

5.3. Undertake Disclosure and Barring Service checks and updates on Shared Lives Carers and any member of the household aged 16 years and over.

5.4. Ensure the Shared Lives Carer has access to Shared Lives Statement of Purpose, Policies and Procedures, and endeavour to ensure that, through training and explanation, they are understood by the Shared Lives Carer.

5.5. Provide, where requested, accessible versions of Shared Lives aim, values, and policies and procedures to Individuals placed with the Shared Lives Carer.

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

5.6. Ensure that, through training and explanation, the Shared Lives Carer understands and fulfils their legal responsibilities to provide services that ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of Individuals.

5.7. Allocate a named project worker to each Shared Live Carer who will be responsible for their ongoing support and monitoring the services provided.

5.8. Ensure that the Shared Lives Carer has the skills and knowledge to meet the changing needs of the Individual through the provision of ongoing training as required.

5.9. Endeavour to identify any specialist services required to meet the Individual's needs are available and ensure the Shared Lives Carer has ongoing access to any relevant advice and information.

5.10. Ensure that any identified unmet needs of the Individual are brought to the attention of the relevant professionals.

5.11. Officers of Shared Lives will be available during working hours (or by prior arrangement outside of these hours).

5.12. Provide the Shared Lives Carer with clear information about emergency and out of hours support.

5.13. Undertake an annual inspection of the home, including an assessment of any pets in the household.

5.14. Provide liability insurance.

Placements

Shared Lives will:

5.15. Undertake a thorough matching process following receipt of documentation, including a risk assessment, following a meeting with the Individual.

5.16. Facilitate and liaise with the appropriate Case Manager for the introduction of the Individual to the Shared Lives Carer and their household/family, the completion of an Individual's About Me Plan, the contracting and review of any placement provided by Shared Lives Carer.

5.17. Prior to a planned placement, provide the Shared Lives Carer with an up-to-date Care and Support Plan, About Me Plan and Risk Assessment outlining the assessed needs of the Individual.

5.18. Ensure that the Individual Placement Agreement has been agreed by all parties prior to the beginning of each planned placement and agreement confirmed either in writing or by e mail.

5.19. When a placement ends Shared Lives, will work with Carers, Individuals and others to ensure the removal of all belongings within 28 days of a placement ending. Carers will be supported by their allocated Project Worker to review and de-brief at the end of placements. Consideration will be given for future placements and what worked well or not so well.

Emergency Placements

Shared Lives will:

5.20. Provide the Shared Lives Carer with all relevant information about an Individual's needs prior to any emergency placement.

5.21. Ensure that an emergency referral form has been received before the start of an emergency placement.

5.22. Ensure that risks or potential risks to the Individual, Shared Lives Carer and/or Shared Lives Carer's family are identified by the referring team.

5.23. Ensure that the Individual is known to the referring team, who will provide information that supports the placement of the Individual in a Shared Lives Placement.

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

5.24. Ensure the Individual Placement Agreement is completed within 5 working days of the start of the emergency placement. If the placement is to continue beyond 5 working days an About Me Plan must be completed.

5.25. Ensure that Emergency Placements are reviewed and assessed weekly to determine whether this will become a permanent placement.

6. Support and Monitoring Visits

6.1. The Shared Lives Carer will engage with regular support and monitoring visits undertaken by Shared Lives officers and will allow access to their home at all reasonable times.

6.2. Shared Lives will conduct regular monitoring visits, throughout the year, these will also include visits which may be made unannounced.

6.3. Unannounced visits will take place between the hours of 8am and 10pm, unless the Shared Lives Carer has been informed otherwise by Shared Lives.

7. Placement and About Me Plan Reviews

7.1. Shared Lives will ensure that long term and additional support placements are reviewed one month after commencement followed by a review at six-month intervals. Short term placements will be reviewed during or after the placement has taken place, unless it is agreed that more frequent reviews are required. For Long Term placements there will be at least one review held between Shared Lives and Individual only.

7.2. The About Me Plan will be reviewed where any changes are identified, or short-term placements taking place. Reviews will need to take place on a quarterly basis to comply with Adult Placement Service Regulations (2019).

8. Shared Lives Carer Review and Supervision

8.1. The supervision will consider how the Shared Lives Carer is meeting their obligations under this Agreement.

8.2. Shared Lives will identify and facilitate relevant training for a Shared Lives Carer as part of the Supervision process. Supervision will be provided on a regular basis and will be recorded.

8.3. A Re-approval review of a Shared Lives Carer will be undertaken by Shared Lives every two years as a minimum. The Shared Lives Carer will be required to participate fully in this Reapproval Review.

8.4. Shared Lives will present the Reapproval Review to panel for consideration as to whether the Shared Lives Carer's approval should continue or whether any amendments are required. This will include details of training identified and undertaken by the Shared Lives Carer.

8.5. The Shared Lives Carer will be informed of the panel's recommendation within five working days of the panel taking place. Should the Shared Lives Carer wish to appeal the decision, full details of the grounds of appeal must be made in writing to Shared Lives within 28 days of the date of the panel.

8.6. The appeal will be considered within 10 working days of receipt. The outcome and reasons for the decision will be sent to the Shared Lives Carer within a further five working days. There will be no further grounds of appeal to the decision made.

9. Respite

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

9.1. The Shared Lives Carer providing a Long-Term placement will be entitled to an agreed amount of respite per year (pro rata if the placement begins after the start of that year). The agreed amount will be detailed in the Placement Agreement.

9.2. Shared Lives will identify an alternative placement for the Individual during the agreed break.

9.3. Respite requests should be submitted by the Shared Lives Carer to the Shared Lives service with no less than three months' advance notice. Any request received with less than three months' notice will be considered but a guarantee of acceptance is not given. Respite requests must be made in writing including the start and end date and total number of nights that respite is required for.

9.4. Respite allowances cannot be carried forward into the next financial year.

9.5. A Shared Lives Carer who provides Respite is required to inform Shared Lives when they are unavailable to provide a Respite service.

10. Payments

10.1. The Shared Lives Carer will complete time sheets for Respite, Emergency Respite and Additional Support, which will be submitted by deadlines informed to them by Shared Lives. Late submissions will not be paid until the next payment run. Timesheets that are submitted more than two months after the date of the support being given will not be paid.

10.2. The weekly allowance in all cases other than Additional Support, includes the following items in relation to the Individual:

- 24-hour care and support, meals, drinks, snacks, etc
- Laundry
- Telephone
- Broadband
- Agreement to pay any mileage needs to be detailed in the Individual Placement Agreement.
- Furniture as stated in the Individual Placement Agreement
- Bedding, towels, curtains, and carpets.

This list is not exhaustive.

10.3. Mileage for Additional Support will only be paid once the Individual is at the Shared Lives Carer's house that is providing the Additional Support. The only exception to this will be in cases where no other transport is available, and the Shared Lives Carer must collect the Individual from the Individual's home.

Shared Lives will:

10.4. Provide written confirmation to the Shared Lives Carer in the Individual Placement Agreement of the support to be provided for the Individual receiving a service, and any costs to be paid to Shared Lives Carer to cover any additional services or expenses incurred.

10.5. Provide information about how and when fees are to be paid.

10.6. Process timesheets.

10.7. Provide support to Shared Lives Carer in receiving the fees that they are due, should there be any delay or difficulty.

10.8. The Shared Lives service will invoice the Shared Lives Carer for any overpayments of Shared Lives fees as soon as the overpayment is identified.

10.9. Payments for vacant placements will be made as follows.

Circumstance	Placement Type	Payment Due
Individual leaves placement	Long Term and Short-Term	100% of standard weekly fee for a

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

	Placements (with or without notice)	period of up to 28 days - please see 12.3 below in respect of move on and hospitalization.
	Emergency Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
	Respite Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
Death of Individual	Long Term and Short-Term Placements	100% of the standard weekly fee for a maximum of 28 days.
	Emergency Placement	Payment up to and including the day of death.
	Respite Placement	Payment at the discretion of Shared Lives service
Removal of Individual from placement for safety of Shared Lives Carer (Individual not returning to placement)	Long Term and Short-Term Placements	100% of the standard weekly fee for a maximum of 28 days.
	Emergency Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
	Respite Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
Removal of Individual from placement due to Safeguarding concerns (whether relating to Shared Lives Carer or not)	Long Term and Short-Term Placements	100% of the standard weekly fee for a maximum of 28 days; 50% of weekly fee thereafter until a decision regarding the continuation of the placement is made.
		If a decision is made to end the placement before 28 days has elapsed, 100% of the weekly fee will be paid for the remainder of the notice period.
	Emergency Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
	Respite Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
Removal of Individual due to actions of Shared Lives Carer.	Long Term and Short-Term Placements.	Weekly fee will stop immediately from day Individual leaves the placement.
Admission of the Individual to hospital	Long Term and Short-Term Placements	100% of the standard weekly fee for a maximum of 4 weeks; 50% of standard weekly fee thereafter until a decision regarding the continuation of the placement is

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

	Emergency Placement	made. Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
	Respite Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is vacated.
Shared Lives Carer illness	Long Term and Short-Term Placements	Respite allowance to be utilized in first instance. If no allowance is available, payment will be made at the discretion of the service.
	Emergency Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is unavailable.
	Respite Placement	Payment up to and including the day the placement is unavailable.
Placement cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice from Shared Lives Carer.	Respite and Day Support	No payment.
Placement cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice from the Individual or other person/agency.	Respite and Day Support	Payment at the discretion of Shared Lives Service.

10.10. When the Individual has been in hospital for two months, a Shared Lives Officer will undertake an assessment of the future care needs of the individual. If it is deemed by Shared Lives that the Individual will be returning to placement the standard weekly fee will remain unchanged from Clause 10.9 above. If the decision is that the Individual is unable to return to placement, a notice period will not apply.

11. Complaints

11.1. The Shared Lives Carer will contact the Registered Manager if they believe the service has breached any of their responsibilities as laid out in the agreement.

11.2. Shared Lives Registered Manager will respond promptly to any complaints by the Shared Lives Carer.

12. Notice

12.1. For Long Term Placements and Short-Term Placements, the Shared Lives Carer will give 28 days' notice in writing to Shared Lives, if they intend to withdraw from the Scheme. Fourteen days' notice in writing is required for day support and respite placements.

12.2. Shared Lives will give the Shared Lives Carer 28 days' notice in writing of intention to end the Shared Lives Carer Agreement. Shared Lives must put the reasons for ending the Carer Agreement in writing and must give the Shared Lives Carer details of the process by which they can appeal the decision.

12.3. In cases of move-on or hospitalisation where there are prolonged discussions and plans in place, the above notice periods do not apply and the end date for placement will be the decision date. Payment will be made up to and including the day the individual leaves the placement.

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

12.4. In cases of safeguarding concerns, the placement may end immediately but the fees stated in clause 10 will apply.

13. Breaches of Agreement

13.1. Shared Lives will investigate any alleged breaches of the Carer Agreement by the Shared Lives Carer, in relation to following Shared Lives policies and procedures.

13.2. Where appropriate, the investigation will also include the Care Inspectorate for Wales, the Commissioning Team and/or the Adult Safeguarding Team.

13.3. In the event of an allegation of a serious breach of this Agreement, Shared Lives will suspend any existing placements. This will be in accordance with Wales Safeguarding Procedures and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 where the Individual's safety or well-being is deemed to be at risk.

13.4. If a Long-Term Placement or Short-Term Placement is suspended whilst the allegation is investigated in accordance with Wales Safeguarding Procedures and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, placement fees will be paid at the rates detailed in clause 10.9, until the investigation has been completed and it has been demonstrated that there has been a serious breach of this Agreement.

13.5. Failure of the Shared Lives Carer to adhere to the requirements of clauses 6 and 8 will be deemed to be a breach of the Agreement.

14. Safeguarding

The Shared Lives Carer and all members of the household must be fully aware of the need to protect and safeguard children/young persons and vulnerable adults. The Shared Lives Carer must comply with all requirements of legislation concerning Child and Adult Safeguarding, the Shared Lives Carer must attend safeguarding training to ensure up to date knowledge. The Shared Lives Carer will also notify Shared Lives, the Individual's Case Manager or Duty Officer, and if appropriate Emergency out of Hours outside of office hours if they become aware of any significant event, which could impact on the emotional and physical well-being of a child/young person or vulnerable adult. The Shared Lives Carer and staff also have a duty of care to report child and adult safeguarding concerns to the Responsible Persons. Reporting should be made to Shared Lives and the appropriate Safeguarding Authority for The Vale 01446 700111 and for Bridgend 01656 642477

14.1. The Shared Lives Carer will adhere to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures

14.2. The Shared Lives Carer must download the "Wales Safeguarding App" (which is available via android and Apple) to ensure up to date information relating to safeguarding is readily available.

15. Changing Needs and Circumstances

15.1. It is recognised and agreed by both parties that this contract is based upon the assessed needs of the Individual, the circumstances and environment pertaining at commencement. However, it is equally recognised that these needs and circumstances can change.

15.2. At the point of moving into a property, the person's Care and Support plan will be used to identify the assessed needs of the Individual. If these needs change over a sustained period, Shared Lives will request a reassessment.

15.3. The Shared Lives Carer shall not make any changes to the support hours without the written agreement of Shared Lives. Any changes to support made as a result of an emergency situation in line with Shared Lives procedures will be notified

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

on the next working day to Shared Lives for discussion and agreement if the change is permanent.

15.4. Where an Individual is out of the placement for an overnight or extended stay, this visit will be notified on the next working day to Shared Lives.

16. Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) Liberty Protection Safeguards/LPS

16.1. The Shared Lives Carer shall comply with the provisions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the guidance contained within the Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice and the Mental Capacity (amendment) Bill 2019.

16.2. The Shared Lives Carer shall at no point deprive an individual of his/her liberty without having the necessary authorisation in place.

16.3. Prior to the placement commencing the Individuals Case Manager must assess the Individual's capacity to consent to their care and support and accommodation. Where the Individual lacks capacity to consent to their care and support and would be prevented from leaving a placement (even if they would not try to do so or were not physically able to) then it is the Case Manager's responsibility to make an application to the Court of Protection for a Deprivation of Liberty Authorisation.

16.4. Where a Shared Lives Carer is concerned about an Individual's capacity to make a specific decision about the care and support and accommodation they are receiving, they must contact Shared Lives. Shared Lives will notify the Individuals Case Manager who will arrange for the required Mental Capacity Assessments to take place and if deemed unable to consent to the required restrictions in place (even if the individual does not object) will commence the required Court of Protection application.

16.5. Court of Protection will oversee any disputes or appeals raised by the Relevant Persons Representative RPR).

17. Variations

17.1 No subsequent amendment or variation to this Agreement contract shall take effect unless it is in writing and properly signed by duly authorised signatories of both parties.

17.2 The following unilateral Variations shall where they occur have immediate effect and bind the parties:

17.21 Changes to Shared Lives, the weekly standard fee, additional payment fee or the Services required due to changes in the funding received from the Welsh Government or such other direction as the Welsh Government shall make.

17.22 Changes in legislation.

Name of Shared Lives Carer 1(print):

Signed:

Date:

Name of Shared Lives Carer 2 (print):

Signed:

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

Date:

Operational Manager for Adult Services (print):

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 1 – Carer Agreement

SHARED LIVES SERVICE CONTACT DETAILS

Responsible Individual
Linda Woodley Operational Manager for Adult Services Vale of Glamorgan Council Dock Offices Subway Road Barry CF63 4RT Telephone: (01446) 704678 Email: LMWoodley@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
Authorised Officer Vale of Glamorgan Council
Paul Marchant Shared Lives Registered Manager Vale of Glamorgan Council Hen Goleg College Fields Close Barry CF62 8LF Telephone: (01446) 731105 Email: pmarchant@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

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



www.bridgend.gov.uk



Shared Lives Scheme Proposals

Bridgend County Borough and the Vale of Glamorgan

Consultation Paper

CONTENTS

Section	Subject	Page No.
1	Background	2
2	What are the aims of this consultation?	2
3	When will the consultation take place?	3
4	What is the proposal for?	3
5	Questions & Answers	5
6	How will the Council collect views and opinions?	6
7	Explanation of terms used in the context of this document	7
8	Feedback Form	8

1. What are the aims of this consultation?

The aims of the consultation are to:-

- Make sure that all interested parties are aware of the Council's proposals.
- Provide clear information so that people understand why the changes are necessary.
- Make sure that people have all the information they need to come to an informed opinion.
- Encourage people to give their views on the proposal (outlined in section 4).
- Make sure people know how to submit their views.
- Collect feedback and consider this before a final decision is made.

2. When will the consultation take place?

The Council will be collecting feedback for 12 weeks from 30th of March to the 21st of June 2026 (see section 6 for how to give your views).

As well as this document, throughout this consultation period, Council officers will be contacting individuals involved with the Shared Lives Scheme. This includes both individuals supported by the service, and Shared Lives Carers providing the care and support to these individuals, as there are proposals that impact both groups. During these meetings officers will explain the proposals to individuals face-to-face as well as meeting with Shared Lives carers. There will be a chance to ask questions.

After the consultation ends, all feedback will be analysed and a report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet. This report will set out the proposal and final recommendations, taking into account the feedback from the consultation.

3. What is the Shared Lives Scheme and what are the proposals?

The Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend Shared Lives scheme partnership is available for people aged over 18 with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health problems or dementia, who have been assessed as having a need for accommodation and support... The Shared Lives scheme aims to enable people with a disability to experience ordinary family life, supported by Carers who have been assessed and trained to provide a person-centred approach to the care and support provided. . The Shared Lives scheme recruits carers from all walks of life People of any age or background, single people, couples and families with or without children are welcome to apply and join if they have a spare room and time within their homes and lives to support an individual who needs it. Payment for the care provided is tax free and paid on a monthly basis. For more information on the Shared Lives Scheme click [here](#).

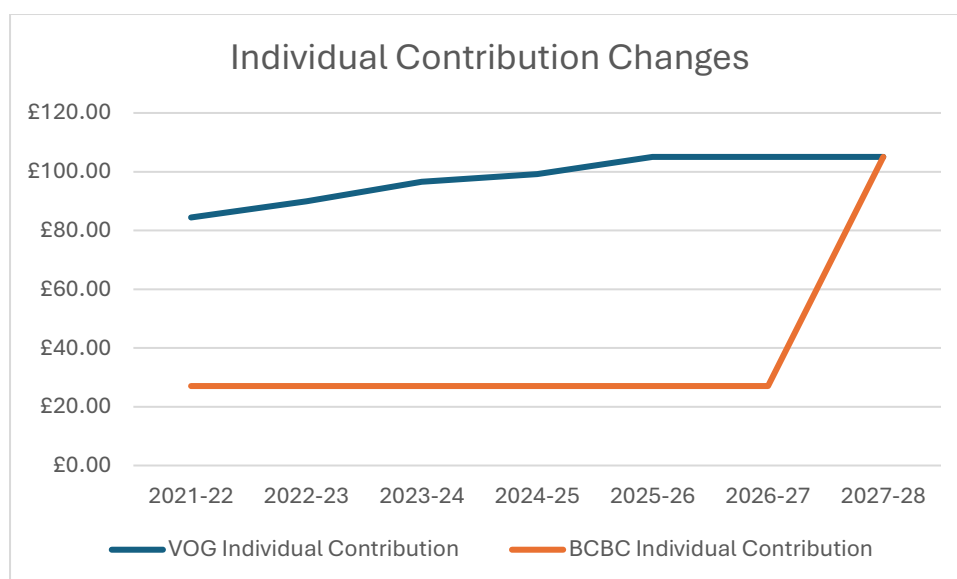
There are two proposals that this consultation seeks feedback for.

Impact to the Supported Individual

Firstly, a proposed change to the amount an individual supported by the scheme pays per week towards their meals and utility bills. Under current arrangements individuals from Bridgend contribute £27.05 per week for their meals and utility bills. Since the scheme was established in 2015 this amount has not increased. This was an oversight and has created inequity with other supported living services in BCBC who pay a much higher contribution

towards utilities and food and with other Shared Lives Schemes across Wales, who also charge a higher individual contribution. It is therefore proposed that the individual contribution is raised to £105.03 per week which will more accurately cover the cost of an individual's meals and utility bills. This contribution would then be the same for individuals supported by the service whether they are from the Bridgend or the Vale of Glamorgan.

The following graph shows that individual contributions in Bridgend, currently £27.05 per week, have never been increased since 2015; in contrast to the VOG where annual increases in individual contributions towards their accommodation have taken place in line with the real cost of living.



Individuals in Bridgend have, unknowingly benefitted from BCBC not having increased payments in line with the real cost of living. In so doing, the 'ordinary lives' ethos of Shared Lives has been skewed as people are not contributing to the real cost of living and fails to prepare some people for their next move to greater independence.

Individuals will also be required to pay the Local Housing Allowance rate for their rent. Individuals will be supported to ensure they are claiming the correct amount for this to be covered through their benefits/universal credit allowances.

Impact to the Shared Lives Carer

Secondly, there is a change proposed to the weekly amounts a carer providing care and support to individuals as a part of this scheme receive. Currently, carers across the scheme receive differing amounts depending on whether they are a Bridgend or Vale of Glamorgan based carer. This also extends to a different amount of paid annual leave the carers receive where the individual(s) they support receive care and support through a short break/respite placement. The following table shows the differences of the current rates of remuneration and leave between Bridgend and the Vale.

Remuneration Item	Bridgend	Vale of Glamorgan
Base allowance (weekly)	£616.77	£503.11
Additional allowance (weekly)	No	£105.39 if personal care is require

Leave entitlement	2 weeks	4 weeks
-------------------	---------	---------

The aim of this second proposal is to bring about a consistent set of terms and conditions for carers across the partnership. In addition to this, current arrangements do not consistently take into account the complexity, variety and differences in levels of care and support that carers are required to provide depending on the needs of the individual(s) they support. As such the following banding system has been devised for long term placements to be implemented across the partnership.

Banding	Rate	Leave entitlement
Band 1	£505.91	4 weeks
Band 2	£640.08	4 weeks
Band 3	£670.82	4 weeks
Band 4 (Health funded placements)	£810.88	4 weeks

Banding decisions will be based on the needs identified in the persons Well-Being Assessment, completed with the person and their Case Manager/Care Coordinator. The different Banding levels take into account:

- Time commitment
- Level of support
- Complexity and skill required beyond standard expectations

This model is already in use across **11 other Welsh local authorities**.

The following table breaks down what the differences between these bandings will be.

Banding	Descriptor
Band 1	The individual requires a low level of support and is able to go out independently.
Band 2	The individual requires a moderate level of support and may need to be accompanied when outside of the home. The individual will require some support with personal care. The individual may have occasional emotional or behaviour support needs.
Band 3	The individual requires a moderate level of support and regularly needs to be accompanied when outside of the home. The individual will require full support with personal care. The individual may have regular emotional or behaviour support needs.
Band 4 (Health placements)	Health-funded care requiring clinical governance due to complexity

Once assigned, a band will travel with the individual across long-term placements and short-breaks/respite. A mandatory review will occur:

- Within 3 months of a long-term placement
- And/or
- After the third short break/respite
- And/or
- When an individual's needs change requiring a statutory review of their Care and Support Plan and/or wellbeing assessment
- And/or
- Annually

There are also amendments being made to the rates at which carers are paid to provide short breaks or respite placements. The rates paid to carers providing short break/respite care will also be subject to bandings which correspond with the bands paid for long term placement. For example if an individual is in Band 1 for their long term placement, their short break/respite payment will also be a Band 1. The following table breaks down the bandings for short breaks/respite placements:

Banding	Rate
Band 1	£626.25
Band 2	£740.23
Band 3	£775.78
Band 4 (Health funded placements)	£992.07

This consultation is seeking to understand people's views towards this move to banded payments and how this could be implemented.

4. Questions & Answers

During the consultation there will be a number of ways in which you can submit questions about this proposal (see Section 6). However, here are answers to some questions you may have:

- When will these new bandings come into force?**
It is anticipated that the new bandings will come into force from January 2027
- As an individual supported by the scheme, do I have to pay the new rate of individual contribution?**
Yes, this is a required change as this will bring about consistency to all individuals supported by the scheme and a more fair and realistic expectation upon you towards the cost of items such as utilities like heating, gas, electricity, water and food bills.
- Why are these bandings being proposed?**
In order to ensure the service is equitable and fair to all carers and individuals supported by the service regardless of whether they are from the Vale of Glamorgan or Bridgend County Borough. It also looks to recognise the day to day differences in the level of care provided by its carers based on the needs of the individuals they support.

5. How will the Council collect views and opinions?

There are a number of ways that the Council will be collecting views and opinions on this proposal:

i. 'Face-to-face' meetings with Individuals and their carers

Meetings will take place during the consultation. These will be an opportunity to find out more about the proposal, ask questions and give your views. All individuals and carers involved with the service will be directly consulted with to obtain their views.

ii. Team Staff Meetings

iii. One to one meetings

Individual meetings with individuals and their families will be arranged where needed.

iv. Advocacy

People First Bridgend, as a commissioned advocacy provider for BCBC, are available to provide advocacy support to individuals supported in the Shared Lives service relating to this consultation.

v. Consultation Portal

Bridgend County Borough Council's consultation portal which will allow you to comment and provide feedback via the Internet found on the Council's website.

vi. In writing

You can respond in writing by writing to the address below.

You can write to us or complete the Feedback Form at the end of this booklet or complete the online version of this form. Letters and forms can be posted to:

Shared Lives Scheme Proposals Consultation
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB
or email consultation@bridgend.gov.uk

6. Explanation of terms used in the context of this document

Advocacy is a service, which represents others or helps them to represent themselves. The advocate will put a person's views forward, make sure that they are kept fully informed and that they have all the information they need to make an informed decision or choice.

Partner agencies - these are agencies who work together to provide services, e.g. the Council, National Public Health Service, Local Health Board etc.

Partnership - co-operation between organisations working together to provide a service.

A **Stakeholder** is a person, group or organisation with a direct interest, involvement, or investment in something, e.g. staff, owners and customers/ individuals of a business or service.

Alternative Formats

This information is available in a range of different formats including a Welsh language version and, on request, in other languages, large print, Braille or audio tape/CD. To make a request for another format, please ask one of the Shared Lives Staff who will pass your request on to the Consultations Team.

8. Feedback form

Bridgend County Borough Council

Shared Lives Scheme Proposals Consultation

Feedback Form

If you would like to comment on this proposal, please complete this form and post it in the questionnaire box or post it to:

Shared Lives Scheme Proposals Consultation
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

If you wish to receive a response to any questions raised on this form please supply your name and address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Please indicate your interest in this project (please ✓):

I am a supported individual

☐

I am related to a supported individual

☐

I am a Shared Lives Carer

☐

I am a member of staff in the Shared Lives Service

☐

Other (please specify) _____

Please insert your comments below (*please feel free to include additional sheets if required*):

Section A – For Everyone (including Shared Lives Carers)

- 1) The reasons for the implementation of the proposed banding system are fair and understandable:

Please tick ✓ one box only

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments in the box below

--

- 2) It is fair that individuals supported by the scheme pay equal contributions towards their daily living costs across the whole service (in Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan):

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Policy detailed.

Please tick ✓ one box only

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree

Please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments or Suggestions in the box below:

--

- 3) It would be best to move all Shared Lives carers straight onto the proposed banding system immediately:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Policy detailed.

Please tick ✓ one box only

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree

Please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments or Suggestions in the box below:

--

--

4) The banding should be phased in over time:
 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Policy detailed.
 Please tick ✓ one box only

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree

Please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments or
 Suggestions in the box below:

--

Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make about the
 proposed banding arrangements or their implementation, or any other comments
 you wish to provide?

Please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments in the box
 below:

--

Section B – For individuals supported by the service

1) Do you think you should be paying a fair amount towards the real costs of living, such
 as food, washing, heating and lighting in the home?

Please tick ✓ one box only

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

If possible, please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments or
 suggestions in the box below:

--

2) Do agree that things should be fair and equal for people living in the Shared Lives service, whether they live in Bridgend or in the Vale of Glamorgan?

Please tick ✓ one box only

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

If possible, please give reasons for your answer or provide further comments or suggestions in the box below:

--

About You

The Council operates equality policies that aim to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally. To make sure that people are not discriminated against when accessing our services we carry out monitoring and therefore would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. The information you provide is strictly confidential.

Age: (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Under 16 | ☐ 30-39 | ☐ 60-74 | ☐ 86+ |
| ☐ 16-24 | ☐ 40-49 | ☐ 75-85 | ☐ Prefer not to say |
| ☐ 25-29 | ☐ 50-59 | | |

Welsh Language – are you: (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ☐ Fluent speaker & writer | ☐ Fluent speaker | ☐ Learner |
| ☐ Fairly fluent speaker & writer | ☐ Fairly fluent speaker | ☐ Little or no knowledge |

The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term (i.e. has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months) adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| ☐ Yes | ☐ No | ☐ Prefer not to say |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|

Ethnic origin: (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ White British | ☐ Mixed: White & Asian | ☐ Black: African |
| ☐ White Irish | ☐ Indian | ☐ Black: Caribbean |
| ☐ Mixed: White & Black Caribbean | ☐ Bangladeshi | ☐ Chinese |
| ☐ Mixed: White & Black African | ☐ Pakistani | ☐ Prefer not to say |
| ☐ Other (please specify): | <input type="text"/> | |

Sex (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Male | ☐ Female | ☐ Transgender | ☐ Prefer not to say |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|

Religion/Belief: (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| ☐ Christian | ☐ Buddhist | ☐ Hindu | ☐ Jewish | ☐ Muslim |
| ☐ Sikh | ☐ No religion | ☐ Prefer not to say | ☐ Any other religion | |
| ☐ Any other religion (please specify): | <input type="text"/> | | | |

Sexual Orientation (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Heterosexual | ☐ Lesbian | ☐ Gay | ☐ Bisexual | ☐ Prefer not to say |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|

Nationality (please ✓ one answer)

- | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ☐ Welsh | ☐ Scottish | ☐ English | ☐ British |
| ☐ Irish | ☐ Prefer not to say | ☐ Other | |
| ☐ Other (please specify): | <input type="text"/> | | |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME



Shared Lives Scheme Changes



We would like to hear what you think





Shared Lives Scheme Changes



Shared Lives helps you live a **happy life** in a **family home**.



There will be some **changes** to **Shared Lives in Bridgend**.

This **booklet** tells you about the **changes**.



It is **important** that you:

- **Understand** the changes
- **Ask questions**
- **Say what you think**



What is staying the same?



Shared Lives will continue to support you.

You will still:



- Live in a **family home**
- Get **care and support**
- Be **listened to**
- Be supported to live a **good life**



Even though some things are changing, Shared Lives will still support you.



What will change?



You will **pay more** for **food and bills**.

The money you pay at home is called **Individual Contributions**.



Individual Contributions help pay for:

- Food
- Gas and electricity
- Water
- Heating



Prices for **food and bills** have gone up for everyone.



What will change?



Right now, you pay **£27.05 a week** for **food and bills**.



Food and bills now **cost more than before**.



The plan is to change the amount you pay to **£105.03 a week**.



This change would be for **everyone** supported by the **Shared Lives Scheme**.



Making it fair



People who live **outside Bridgend** already **pay more** for **food and bills**.



Bridgend Council believes **everyone** should pay the **same amount**, no matter **where they live**.



This is so the money paid is **fair** for **everyone** supported by **Shared Lives**.



If you feel worried



Change can feel hard.



It is **okay** to feel **worried**, **upset**, or **unsure**.



You are not alone.



You can **talk to someone you trust** like your **Shared Lives carer**, **family member**, or **support worker**.



When will this happen?



The **changes** will not happen right **now**.

The changes are planned for **next** year.



Bridgend Council wants to listen to you first. Your views are important.



This is called giving feedback.



Having your say



You can **give your feedback** in **different ways**.

This can be in a **Group Meeting**,



Or a **private meeting**.



Or you can **write a letter to Bridgend Council**.



You can **choose what feels best for you**, and it is **okay if you decide not to give feedback**.



Getting help to have your say

People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhai pobl yn gyntaf

People First Bridgend is a charity that supports people.



They can help you **understand information** and **share your views**.



They help people feel **confident** and **listened to**.

People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhai pobl yn gyntaf

Staff from **People First Bridgend** will be at the **feedback meetings**.



The Group Feedback Meetings



You can come to a **Group Feedback Meeting** with Bridgend Council, with support from People First Bridgend.



Other people supported by **Shared Lives** will also be there.



You can **ask questions** to help you **understand these changes**.



You can **listen to others** and **share your views** if you want to.



The Group Feedback Meetings



Choose the meeting you want to come to. You can come to as many as you would like.



**The Greenroom,
Pyle Day Service,
CF33 6BS**



**Bridgend
Resource
Centre,
CF31 3XX**



**Sarn Library,
CF32 9SW**



Private Feedback Meetings



If group meetings are not right for you, there is another option to choose.



People First Bridgend staff can meet you in a **private place**, like **your home**.



You can **share your feedback** in a **quiet and private way**. **Bridgend Council** will **not be there** at these meetings.



Your feedback and questions will be **shared later** with the Council.



Contact details



Tell **Richard** from **Bridgend Council** if you want to attend a **Group Meeting** or have a **Private Meeting**.



And tell Richard what **Group Meeting date** you can make.



You can **contact Richard** by **email** on

Richard.thomas1@bridgend.gov.uk



Or let him know by **phone** on

01656 642469



Writing a letter



If you want to **write** to **Bridgend Council** to give your feedback, the **address** is:

**Shared Lives Scheme Proposals
Consultation**

Bridgend County Borough Council

Civic Offices

Angel Street

Bridgend

CF31 4WB



Or **email**

Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk

About this Information

Easy Read by:

People First Bridgend

www.peoplefirstbridgend.co.

People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf

For:

**Bridgend County Borough
Council**

www.bridgend.gov.uk



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Appendix 3 – Shared Lives Banding Assessment Form

 Bywydau a Rennir Bro Morgannwg Gwasanaeth Lleoli Oedolion Vale of Glamorgan Shared Lives Adult Placement Service	Individuals name	
	Band Level	
	Date completed	
	Social Worker	
	Date for review	

Shared Lives Vale of Glamorgan banding levels

The columns indicate the levels of support typical of each banding level to meet the listed areas of expressed need – if a person requires support in several areas, the combination of support needs may push them up to a higher level.

	Band 1		Band 2		Band 3	
Medication and physical wellbeing	Some support e.g. prompting, help with prescriptions, overseeing		Some support e.g. prompting, help with prescriptions, overseeing (support attending health appointments)		Administering of medication (e.g. storing, recording, administering route and type of medication) (e.g. arranging/accompanying to health appointments, checkups; supporting treatment plans.)	
Night time	No support needed		No support needed		Occasional (not regular) e.g. support at times of ill Health	
Emotional wellbeing	No particular support required, just support with everyday ups and downs.		Occasional or low level support required (e.g. confidence issues)		Daily requirement for emotional support and monitoring presentation (e.g. arranging/accompanying to health appointments, checkups; supporting treatment plans.)	
Supervision, safety and risk management	Can be left alone at home, and/or can go out independently		Can be left alone at home for short periods, will need Shared Lives carer about most of the time to keep me safe;		Will always need my Shared Lives carer to be around day and night to keep me safe; Regular supervision required. Risk assessments required (e.g. making themselves vulnerable)	
Psychological and/or psychiatric wellbeing	Occasional support required		Low level support to manage psychological wellbeing and mental health (individual has insight to their needs and triggers e.g. obsessive-compulsive behaviour)		Daily monitoring and support to manage psychological wellbeing and mental health (e.g. inappropriate response to boundaries and/or challenges)	
Stimulation and encouragement	Self-motivated with some prompting to engage activities of daily living		Regular prompting and motivating to complete activities of daily living		Continuous daily support to complete activities of daily living	
Personal care	Prompting, supervision or help (e.g. washing, reminding to have regular showers)		Intimate care needs involving direct contact with, or exposure of, the private area of the body. This includes tasks like washing, dressing, toileting, and managing continence or menstruation, particularly when assistance is needed due to physical or developmental limitations		Extensive support with intimate care needs involving direct contact with, or exposure of, the private area of the body. This includes tasks like washing, dressing, toileting, and managing continence or menstruation, particularly when assistance is needed due to physical or developmental limitations	
Social contacts (inc. family)	Encouragement to maintain current relationships and develop new ones. Guidance to enable healthy sexual relationships as required.		Support with keeping up current relationships and developing new ones. Support to enable healthy sexual relationships as required.		Support required to maintain/develop family contacts and other social contact. (might include mentoring in social skills). Support to enable healthy sexual relationships as required.	

Appendix 3 – Shared Lives Banding Assessment Form

Community access	Able to access community independently, or with only minimal support		Some supervision and support required to maintain or build confidence to access community links (e.g. initially attending activities to build confidence)		Supervision and support required to attend community activities (e.g. carer required to stay and support at groups/activities)	
Employment, education or training	Able to access employment, education or training independently, or with only minimal support		Support and guidance to identify and access opportunities (e.g. filling in forms, making phone calls, attending interviews, improving employability skills)		Significant support to identify and access appropriate opportunities (e.g. filling in forms, making phone calls, attending interviews, improving employability skills)	
Advocacy or Self Advocacy	Some advocacy support required, developmental support for self-advocacy (e.g. with health appointments)		Significant support with self-advocacy development and/or advocacy frequently required (e.g. Getting full information and making decisions about health, work, relationships.)		Lacks capacity around decision making in specific areas and may require support from independent mental capacity advocate (IMCA)	
Communication	Little or no support needed with communication		Some support to aid communication difficulties. (e.g. helping someone use British sign language or accessible information)		High level support with processing information, both verbal and written; requirement to anticipate people's needs	
Money	Independent – Guidance plus some occasional input (support developing budgeting skills)		Frequent guidance, and regular help/supervision required (e.g. consider capacity around finances; appointeeship)		Lacks capacity to manage finances (e.g. appointeeship)	
Transport/Travel	Can learn and use new routes via public transport with initial support and/or travel independently in a taxi		Unable to travel independently on public transport, support may be required to access public transport and/or vehicle		Unable to travel independently on public transport, support may be required to access public transport and/or vehicle	
Mobility	Can mobilise unassisted, some issues (e.g. requires occasional supportive arm or guidance)		Needs supervision and support with stairs and support crossing roads		Needs continuous support due to mobility issues and possible reasonable adjustments to environment and/or equipment	

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Shared Lives Consultation – Combined, Anonymised Summary for Individuals, Family and Public

Overview

One publicly accessible online questionnaire was made available as a form of open consultation, as well as an Easy Read format of the key questions made available for all Individuals and Carers within the Shared Lives scheme.

Three in-person consultation discussions were held with people supported through Shared Lives, carers, family members, advocacy representatives and council officers regarding proposed changes to charges for accommodation, food and household costs from 2027.

Across all meetings, participants generally understood the reasons for the proposed changes, particularly rising living costs and the aim of creating greater consistency with charging arrangements. However, concerns were raised about affordability, the size of the increase, and the potential impact on people's quality of life and opportunities.

Key Themes

1. General Support for Fair and Consistent Charging

A strong theme across the consultations was that people felt charges should be fair and applied consistently across everyone using Shared Lives.

Participants generally agreed that:

- Rising food and household costs make some increase understandable.
- People in similar circumstances should contribute on a similar basis.
- Consistency between local authority areas is desirable.

Several individuals explicitly stated that "everyone should pay the same" and that equal treatment was fair.

2. Concerns About Affordability

Despite broad agreement with the principle of fairness, participants expressed concerns about the financial impact of increased charges.

Key issues included:

- Individuals having less disposable income.
- Reduced ability to pay for social activities and community participation.
- Concerns that people may need to reduce spending on outings, meals out, cinema trips and hobbies.
- Worries that some individuals have limited savings and may struggle to absorb significant increases.

Participants across the various meetings stressed the importance of maintaining current lifestyles and opportunities for inclusion while implementing any new charging arrangements.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

3. Importance of Quality of Life

A recurring message was that people supported through Shared Lives value active and fulfilling lives.

Examples discussed included:

- Attending college.
- Taking holidays and respite breaks.
- Socialising with friends and partners.
- Community activities.
- Employment.
- Recreational outings.

Participants feared that substantial increases in contributions could reduce opportunities for these activities if disposable income decreases. Maintaining wellbeing and social participation was viewed as equally important as ensuring fairness in charging arrangements.

4. Particular Concerns for People in Employment or Retired

One consultation response highlighted concerns regarding the impact on an individual who works and contributes from earned income rather than relying solely on benefits.

Family members questioned whether a large increase could disproportionately affect working individuals and potentially undermine efforts to remain in employment.

Discussion focused on ensuring that charging arrangements do not unintentionally disadvantage people who work.

One consultation discussion highlighted the circumstances of an older supported individual living in a long-established Shared Lives arrangement. The individual valued stability, consistency and remaining in their home environment. However, expressed concerns about how proposed charges would apply to someone with a pension rather than Universal Credit, and the Carer expresses a strong preference for maintaining consistent support arrangements and minimising disruption.

5. Need for Individual Financial Assessments

There was recognition that impacts will differ between individuals.

Participants welcomed clarification that:

- Benefits and financial circumstances would be reviewed.
- Financial assessments would be undertaken where appropriate.
- Individual circumstances would be considered before implementation.

There was reassurance that assessments would help determine the practical effect of the proposed changes on each person's finances.

6. Understanding and Managing Money

Some discussions highlighted that:

- Many people have support from carers, relatives, appointees or deputyships to manage finances.
- Some individuals would find large financial changes difficult to understand independently.
- Family members and carers often provide significant support with budgeting and financial decisions.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Participants emphasised the importance of clear communication and appropriate support throughout the implementation process.

7. Positive Feedback About Shared Lives

Participants consistently expressed satisfaction with Shared Lives arrangements. Comments reflected that people:

- Feel happy and settled where they live.
- Value family-based support.
- Enjoy positive relationships with carers.
- Appreciate convenient locations close to family, work and local amenities.
- Experience active and fulfilling lifestyles within Shared Lives.

No concerns were raised about the quality of support being received through the Shared Lives scheme itself.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Public Online Consultation – Anonymised Summary

Three written consultation responses were received through the online consultation questionnaire. Two responses were submitted by relatives of supported individuals and one response was submitted by a member of the public identifying themselves as a council tax payer.

It should be noted that the council tax payer response represents approximately 1 respondent out of a 2026–27 Bridgend County Borough Council tax base of 55,793.37 Band D equivalent properties, equating to approximately 0.0018% of the tax-paying population.

Additional Themes from Online Consultation Responses

1. Support for Fair and Consistent Charging

The two responses from relatives of supported individuals broadly agreed with the principle of fairness and consistency. Respondents accepted the rationale for implementing a banding approach but emphasised that implementation should not adversely affect supported individuals or carers.

2. Preference for Phased Implementation

Both family-member responses suggested that a staggered or phased introduction would be fairer, particularly for self-funding individuals. Respondents expressed concern about the impact of sudden increases and highlighted the need to minimise financial shocks.

3. Impact on Self-Funding Individuals

A theme emerging from the family responses was concern that self-funding individuals could experience a different impact from those whose increased costs may be met through benefits or other state-funded support.

4. Public Response Focused on Value for Money

The council tax payer response strongly disagreed with the proposals and questioned the use of public funds to support the scheme. The response argued that council resources should be prioritised elsewhere and expressed opposition to perceived subsidy arrangements. As this view was expressed by a single respondent, it should be considered alongside the wider consultation evidence.

5. Communication and Information

One respondent felt insufficient information had been provided regarding the operation of the proposed banding system and suggested that consultees required greater detail to make informed comments.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

6. Welsh Language

No specific impacts on opportunities to use Welsh were identified by respondents. One respondent expressed opposition to translation and Welsh language considerations, while the remaining respondents did not identify any concerns or impacts.

Key Issues for Consideration

The consultation feedback suggests the following issues may require consideration before implementation:

1. Balancing fairness and consistency with affordability.
 2. Protecting individuals' ability to participate in social, leisure and community activities.
 3. Considering the impact on people with limited savings.
 4. Understanding implications for people who are in employment.
 5. Ensuring robust financial assessments and benefit reviews.
 6. Providing accessible information and support for individuals and families.
 7. Phasing or mitigating significant increases where appropriate to reduce financial shock.
-

Overall Conclusion

The consultation feedback indicates broad acceptance of the principle that Shared Lives charges should reflect increased living costs and be applied consistently across individuals. However, participants consistently emphasised that any changes should be implemented in a way that protects people's quality of life, independence, social participation and financial wellbeing. The strongest concerns related not to the principle of change itself, but to the affordability and practical impact of significant increases on individuals' day-to-day lives.

The public online consultation responses broadly supported the principles of fairness and consistency, particularly among relatives of supported individuals, while emphasising the importance of phased implementation and consideration of individual financial circumstances. One response from a council tax payer opposed the proposals in principle; however, this represents a very small proportion of the overall tax-paying population of Bridgend County Borough.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Anonymised Summary of Shared Lives Consultation Feedback (Carers, in-person @ Civic 15 April 2026)

Purpose of the Consultation

The consultation explored proposals to:

- Introduce a **three-band payment structure** for Shared Lives carers based on assessed support needs.
 - Harmonise **terms and conditions** across Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan Shared Lives schemes.
 - Increase Bridgend carers' **paid respite/annual leave entitlement** from 2 weeks to 4 weeks.
 - Increase individuals' **board and lodging contributions** to better reflect actual living costs and align with arrangements in the Vale.
 - Implement changes from **January 2027**, subject to consultation, scrutiny and Cabinet approval.
-

Key Themes from Feedback

1. General Support for a Fairer Banding System

Most carers understood and broadly supported the principle that:

- People with higher support needs should attract higher payments.
- A banding system is fairer than a flat-rate payment model.
- Consistent arrangements across Bridgend and the Vale would create a more unified regional service.
- Improved payment structures may help recruit and retain carers.

Several carers commented that reward should reflect complexity, time commitment and responsibility rather than personal care alone.

2. Significant Concern About Financial Losses for Some Carers

The strongest concern raised was the financial impact on carers expected to move into **Band 1**.

Key issues included:

- Potential reductions in income despite increased annual leave.
- Existing financial commitments such as mortgages and larger properties needed to support placements.
- Concerns that long-term carers may reconsider continuing in the scheme if income falls significantly.
- Requests for clarity on future earnings before making decisions about remaining carers.

Several carers stated they support the principle of banding but were worried about the practical impact on their household finances.

Suggested Mitigations

Carers suggested:

- Transitional protection arrangements.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

- Phased implementation of reductions.
- Protecting existing placements.
- Alternative options for carers impacted by Band 1 placements.

These suggestions were repeatedly raised throughout consultation meetings.

3. Strong Support for Increased Annual Leave

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding the proposal to increase paid leave from:

- **2 weeks to 4 weeks per year.**

Carers felt:

- Two weeks was insufficient given the 24/7 nature of the role.
- Additional leave better acknowledges caring responsibilities.
- The change is a significant improvement in carers' terms and conditions.

Many carers viewed this as one of the major benefits within the proposals.

4. Recognition of the Hidden Demands of Shared Lives Caring

Several carers highlighted that support needs are not always reflected in visible disability or personal care tasks.

Examples raised included:

- Emotional support.
- Continuous supervision and responsibility.
- Restrictions on carers' social life and employment opportunities.
- Being effectively "on call" 24 hours a day.
- Managing behavioural, social and safety risks.

Carers requested that assessments fully recognise these less visible aspects when determining bands.

5. Concerns About Increased Charges for People Being Supported

A major concern related to proposals for increased board and lodging contributions.

Issues raised included:

- Reduced disposable income.
- Less ability to save for holidays, hobbies and personal goals.
- Impact on individuals who work and do not receive full benefit support.
- Anxiety that people may feel financially disadvantaged despite maintaining the same lifestyle.

Some carers supported the increase in principle but stressed the need for:

- Careful communication.
- Individual financial assessments.
- Phased implementation where appropriate.
- Consideration of exceptional circumstances.

6. Importance of Individual Circumstances

Feedback repeatedly highlighted that:

- Not all support needs are obvious.
- Banding should account for hidden disabilities and vulnerability.
- Financial circumstances vary significantly.
- Some people may require exceptional arrangements.

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Particular concerns were raised regarding individuals who:

- Work full time.
- Have savings.
- Have complex social or emotional vulnerabilities despite appearing relatively independent.

Carers requested flexibility and individual consideration where standard arrangements may not fit well.

7. Views on Caring Motivation

Many long-serving carers stressed that:

- They did not become carers for financial reasons.
- People they support are viewed as family members.
- Stability and quality of life remain the primary motivation.

However, carers also emphasised that:

- Financial sustainability remains important.
 - Caring is increasingly regulated and demanding.
 - Appropriate recognition and remuneration help ensure viability of the role.
-

8. Day Opportunities and Independence

Several discussions focused on helping individuals:

- Develop independence.
- Access employment and volunteering.
- Use public transport.
- Participate in community activities.
- Access meaningful daytime opportunities.

Concerns were raised about limitations in current local provision and the need for more structured activities, particularly for younger adults.

9. Support for Advocacy and Engagement

There was positive feedback regarding:

- Easy-read consultation materials.
- Involvement of advocacy organisations.
- Planned group consultation sessions.
- Ensuring people supported by Shared Lives have opportunities to express their views.

Carers generally welcomed further engagement opportunities.

10. Other Issues Raised

Additional matters raised included:

- Queries regarding tax implications of updated payments.
 - Transport and mileage costs.
 - Use of loyalty/reward cards when shopping for individuals.
 - Future respite capacity.
 - Recruitment and retention of carers.
 - Consistency of social work support.
 - Concerns about long-term planning and future transitions for individuals supported through Shared Lives.
-

Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Overall Consultation Messages

Areas of Broad Support

- ✓ Fairer payment arrangements based on need.
 - ✓ Harmonisation across Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan.
 - ✓ Four weeks paid leave.
 - ✓ Recognition of higher-complexity placements.
 - ✓ Greater consistency and transparency.
-

Areas of Concern

- △ Potential income reductions for some Band 1 carers.
 - △ Increased financial contributions for supported individuals.
 - △ Need for transitional protection and phased implementation.
 - △ Ensuring hidden support needs are reflected in assessments.
 - △ Impact on carers' long-term sustainability and retention.
 - △ Need for flexibility around exceptional financial circumstances.
-

Key Recommendation Emerging from Feedback

The clearest message across the consultation was support for the overall direction of travel, provided implementation includes **careful transitional arrangements, individual flexibility, and appropriate financial protections for carers and supported individuals who may be adversely affected by the changes.**

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Appendix 5 – Comparison of Shared Lives Schemes Banding Rates

Comparison Table of Banding Rates

	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
VOG/BCBC	505.91	640.08	670.82
Powys	339.90	401.70	463.50
SEW	441.21	528.92	613.48
West Wales	357.00	455.00	545.00
Gwynedd & Anglesey	372.00	482.00	596.00
Leicestershire	433.00	485.00	549.00
Nottingham	434.66	459.98	570.34

Vale of Glamorgan Shared Lives Briefing – BCBC Transition to Banding System

Overview

The Shared Lives Partnership Board is preparing to implement a banding system for determining payments to Shared Lives Carers (SLCs). This change aims to standardise terms and conditions across the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend partnership areas, ensuring consistency and fairness in remuneration based on the complexity and intensity of care and support provided.

Implementation Approach

The banding system will be introduced by Vale of Glamorgan Shared Lives, applicable to both Vale and Bridgend placements. Banding decisions will be made in consultation with the individual's Case Manager/Care Coordinator and Project Worker and will consider:

- Time commitment
- Level of support
- Complexity and skill required beyond standard expectations

This model is already in use across **11 other Welsh local authorities**.

Band Descriptors

- **Band 1:** Standard care responsibilities expected of a shared lives carer.
- **Band 2:** Care that exceeds standard expectations in some areas.
- **Band 3:** Care that significantly exceeds standard expectations.
- **Band 4:** Health-funded care requiring clinical governance due to complexity.

Once assigned, a band will travel with the individual across long-term placements and short-breaks/respite. A mandatory review will occur:

Appendix 5 – Comparison of Shared Lives Schemes Banding Rates

- Within 3 months of a long-term placement
- After the third short break/respite

Financial Impact

At present, all Shared Lives Carers (SLCs) in Bridgend receive a standard weekly payment of £616.77 for long-term placements.

This payment is comprised of:

- **Housing Benefit (HB) or Local Housing Rate (LHR) – with LHR set to replace HB as individuals transition to Universal Credit**
- **Social Services funding**
- **Individual contributions**

This structure does not currently differentiate between levels of support or complexity of care provided, which the proposed banding system seeks to address.

Under the new system Long-Term Placement Payments would be:

Current BCBC Payment	New Payment
All placements £616.77 per week	Band 1 - £505.91
	Band 2 - £640.08
	Band 3 - £670.82

Impact by Band:

- **Band 1:** 5 SLC households, 5 individuals → £110.86 loss/week
- **Band 2:** 6 SLC households, 7 individuals → £23.31 gain/week
- **Band 3:** 4 SLC households, 4 individuals → £30.38 gain/week
- **Band 4:** No current placements (would generally only apply to health funded placements)

It should be noted that many SLC who support people who are Band 1 also work full-time and SL is not their sole source of income. Also, some SLC households host more than one individual.

Bridgend Comparison:

Bridgend currently pay their carers at a higher rate of £616.77, although they receive less annual leave (14 days instead of 28) so those on the lowest band would lose £110.86 a week. There are 5 SLC who this would affect, although all carers would gain 14 days additional annual leave as Terms and Conditions will also be standardised across the partnership.

Short Breaks / Respite Payments – Bridgend SLCs

The principle of a banding system has also been applied to Time Away from Care/ Respite and Community Short-Break payments to SLC:

Appendix 5 – Comparison of Shared Lives Schemes Banding Rates

Current BCBC Payment	New Payment
All placements £616.77 per week	Band 1 - £626.25
	Band 2 - £740.23
	Band 3 - £775.78

Impact:

- **No negative impact for any SLC**
- **Increases varies between £9.48 - £159.01**

Individual Contributions

Rent levels have remained static since 2015. With the transition to Universal Credit, we are proposing to set the rent at the Local housing allowance rate, for Bridgend this is £92.05 per week. As the local housing allowance is based on the area in which an individual lives this will be different for each local authority.

- **Vale LHA:** £121.33/week
- **Bridgend LHA:** £92.05/week

Domestic Contributions (uplifted annually) towards food and utilities will be the same across all local authorities and are charged to the individual as follows:

- Meals: £52.04/week
- Heating/Gas/Hot Water/Laundry: £52.99

The payment equation remains:

- **Housing Benefit (HB) or Local Housing Rate (LHR) – with LHR set to replace HB as individuals transition to Universal Credit**
- **Social Services funding**
- **Individual contributions**

Payment to carers will be the same across both Local Authorities.

Summary

This proposed banding system is designed to:

- Align with best practice across Wales
- Ensure fair and transparent payment for carers
- Recognise and reward carers supporting individuals with higher needs
- Encourage broader participation in long-term and respite placements

Appendix 5 – Comparison of Shared Lives Schemes Banding Rates

This is not a cost-saving exercise, but a strategic move to improve equity and sustainability within the Shared Lives programme.

Appendix 6 – Wales Local Housing Allowance Rates 2026-27

BRMA*	Shared Accommodation	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Blaenau Gwent	£300.00	£325.89	£430.00	£490.00	£650.00
Brecon and Radnor	£332.41	£340.00	£440.00	£550.00	£650.00
Bridgend	£300.00	£400.00	£525.00	£575.00	£775.00
Caerphilly	£337.41	£350.00	£495.00	£550.00	£750.00
Cardiff	£366.10	£650.00	£825.00	£925.00	£1,300.00
Carmarthenshire	£336.76	£400.00	£488.84	£535.00	£650.00
Ceredigion	£304.17	£420.00	£500.00	£550.00	£650.00
Flintshire	£380.21	£450.00	£595.00	£695.00	£925.00
Merthyr Cynon	£300.00	£434.52	£500.00	£550.00	£725.00
Monmouthshire	£337.41	£533.16	£700.00	£795.00	£1,100.00
Neath Port Talbot	£375.00	£411.67	£450.00	£500.00	£575.00
Newport	£337.41	£440.00	£600.00	£650.00	£880.00
North Clwyd	£342.41	£395.00	£550.00	£650.00	£855.00
North Powys	£293.30	£325.00	£400.00	£550.00	£675.00
North West Wales	£342.41	£391.07	£550.00	£625.00	£750.00
Pembrokeshire	£297.41	£360.00	£460.00	£575.00	£700.00
South Gwynedd	£342.41	£350.00	£434.52	£543.15	£675.00
Swansea	£375.00	£525.00	£550.00	£600.00	£820.00
Taff Rhondda	£300.00	£375.00	£450.00	£495.00	£650.00
Torfaen	£300.00	£500.00	£564.88	£650.00	£750.00
Vale of Glamorgan	£300.00	£525.77	£666.00	£725.00	£1,025.00
Wrexham	£391.31	£475.00	£525.00	£600.00	£750.00

***Broad Market Rental Area**

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

This document is a multi-purpose tool ensuring the appropriate steps are taken to comply with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) Equality Impact Assessment legislation and to demonstrate that we have shown due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage when taking strategic decisions under the [Socio-economic Duty](#). It also ensures consideration of the [Welsh Language Standards](#).

[Click here to access more information and guidance to help you complete this EIA.](#)

- This assessment should be carried out **before your policy or proposal commences but after your engagement or consultation activities.**
- Your EIA screening form should have informed your consultation or engagement activities.
- If you are undertaking a full public consultation as part of your policy or proposal this form should be completed after the consultation has concluded.
- The results of your consultation and engagement activities will have helped you to gain a better understanding of the needs of those who may be impacted by the policy or proposal.
- **All sections and all questions require a response and must not be left blank even if they are 'not applicable'.**

Name of project, policy, function, service or proposal being assessed:	Shared Lives Service Proposal to Move to Banded Allowances
Brief description and aim of policy or proposal:	This proposal looks to implement a fairer banding system for remuneration for Shared Lives carers mirroring systems that are used in other partnerships across Wales, as well as bring about an increased individual contribution to these bandings. Individual Contributions in BCBC have not had any annual uplift applied, and so are in need of significant amendment.
Who is responsible for delivery of the policy or proposal?	Shared Lives partnership and BCBC Officers
Date EIA screening completed:	28/11/2025

Evidence

Record of other consultation/engagement with people from equality groups, people who represent these groups, staff who work with groups, including any sessions run as part of a public consultation.

Group or persons consulted	Date/venue and number of people	Feedback/areas of concern raised	Action Points
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Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

<i>Example: BSL Forum</i>	<i>BSL Users meeting Date and venue 25 people in attendance.</i>	<i>Deaf people may be unaware of new service as information not available on BSL video.</i>	<i>Ensure updated version of video is available and presented to BSL Forum</i>
Individuals Living in Shared Lives Accommodation	4x meetings with individuals and their carers/family members. 13/05/26 Pyle Life Centre – 1 individual and their carer 19/05/26 Bridgend Resource Centre – 1 individual and their carer 22/05/26 People First Bridgend Offices, Apollo Business Village – 1x individual and their carer with 2x family members joining the meeting virtually. 01/06/26 People First Bridgend Offices, Apollo Business Village – 7 individuals and their carers 7 other individuals supported by the service either chose or their carers/family chose for them not to attend because of their level of	Both the written information circulated to people using the service, and the in-person consultation sessions for individuals to attend were supported and facilitated with Easy Read materials and by attendance of independent advocates from People First Bridgend. General consensus across all the meetings was that there was positive understanding of the need to increase the amount of individual contribution paid to a realistic level for the weekly cost of living for food and utility bills. However, concern was raised as to the impact on the individual to such a sharp increase in proposed weekly contribution, from £27.05 per week to £105 per week. Requests were made to investigate the possibility of phasing the increased contributions in, to support individuals in adapting to and becoming used to the increased contribution.	BCBC officers to investigate the potential for a phased implementation of increased individual contributions to daily living costs, such as food and utility bills.

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

	understanding not being suitable to attend.		
Shared Lives Carers	15/04/26 – Civic Offices Bridgend. 9x Carers attended to discuss the proposals. 1 carer attended and discussed the proposals at the Pyle event above. 1 Carer provided responses via email. 2x carers chose not to engage and provide feedback despite repeated attempts to contact and engage.	General support was given to the rationale behind moving to banded allowances and the need for banded allowances to reflect the differences in levels of care and support provided by the carers to the individuals they support. Concern was raised by carers proposed to be supporting a band 1 individual(s) regarding the loss of income through this proposal, with 2 requesting to stay on their existing arrangement, and 1 indicating they would need to stop if these proposals were implemented.	Investigation is needed into a no detriment approach, whereby existing band 1 carers have their existing rates protected.
General Public	Online consultation form – 1 general public response.	A single resident of Bridgend County borough provided feedback that the Council was wasting money on this sort of service. The individual had not read the consultation document which was evident from the responses provided.	No action required.

If you undertook a full public consultation please enter the details and a summary of the findings here:	All details from the public consultation are provided above.
Please list any existing documents, reports, evidence from previous engagement, previous EIAs, service user	Cabinet report from March 2025 introduced the intention to implement a banding system as part of the ongoing partnership agreement.

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

information etc. which have been used to inform this assessment.	Cabinet report from February 2026 clarified the scope and purpose of the public consultation to be carried out. Shared Lives Partnership Briefing from Vale of Glamorgan, August 2026, included as part of OVSC Report for 10th Sept 2026. An Easy Read consultation document was circulated and available online throughout the open consultation period. All primary stakeholders potentially affected have received the necessary information.
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If you have identified any data gaps then you **MUST** undertake more consultation/engagement/research.

Assessment of Impact

It is important that you record the mitigating actions you will take when developing your final policy or proposal. Record here what measures or changes you will introduce to the policy or proposal in the final draft which could:

- Reduce or remove any unlawful or negative impact or disadvantage;
- Improve equality of opportunity;
- Introduce positive change;
- Reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage;
- Provide opportunities for people to use the Welsh Language;
- Ensure that the Welsh Language is treated no less favourably than the English Language.

Protected characteristics

Based on the data you have analysed, and the results of consultation or engagement, consider what the potential impact will be upon people with protected characteristics (negative or positive). Include any examples of how the policy or proposal helps to promote equality. If you do identify any adverse impact you **must seek legal advice as to whether, based on the evidence provided, an adverse impact is or is potentially discriminatory, and identify steps to mitigate any adverse impact – these actions will need to be included in your action plan.**

	What are the impacts of your policy or proposal? Please place an X in the relevant box			Why have you come to this decision? Please provide an explanation and any supporting evidence.	Considerations to mitigate negative impact(s) and/or secure positive impact(s)
	Positive impact(s)	Negative impact(s)	No impact		
Gender			X	A person's gender has no impact on being either a shared lives	

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

				carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Disability	X			Not all individuals with a disability will be impacted or affected by these proposals as these proposals only relate to those individuals who are supported through the Shared Lives service – currently 16 people in long-term placements. Under the current arrangements, no annual increases to an individuals contribution to bills and food have occurred, or been subject to an any inflationary uplift. This has resulted in individuals contributing a static and unrealistic amount towards their cost of living for more than 10 years. Disabled people in other care services have not had this static arrangement, resulting in an unbalanced position for disabled people across different services. This is currently an unfair outcome of the current arrangement in Shared Lives. The need to change the level of financial contribution from individuals in Shared Lives reflects a rebalancing of equity	Financial assessments have been undertaken by the Financial Safeguarding team to ensure the viability and suitability of these increased contribution. Additionally, in response to consultation feedback, officers are assessing options for a phased increase in contributions from supported individuals, to enable them to become accustomed to paying realistic contributions towards daily living costs.

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

				for disabled people across services. Whilst there will be a financial change for those individuals supported by the service, this is deemed to be a positive impact as this increase will reflect a more realistic contribution towards daily living.	
Race			X	A person's race has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Religion and belief			X	A person's religion or belief has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Sexual Orientation			X	A person's sexual orientation has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Age			X	This service is for individuals over the age of 18 and so has no impact on children or young people. A adult's age has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme depending on them	

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

				meeting the criteria to be a carer/supported by the service. Therefore this proposal will have no impact on adults of a certain age.	
Pregnancy & Maternity			X	A person being pregnant or on maternity leave has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Transgender			X	A person's transgender status has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Marriage and Civil partnership			X	A person's marriage or civil partnership status has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme.	
Care Experienced			X	A person being care experienced has no impact on being either a shared lives carer or an individual supported in the shared lives scheme depending on them meeting the criteria to be a carer/supported by the service. Therefore this proposal will have no impact on individuals who are care experienced.	

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

Socio-economic impact

Does the evidence gathered suggest that your policy or proposal will have a disproportionate impact on people living in socio-economic disadvantage? This could include communities of place or communities of interest (i.e., where stakeholders, service users, staff, representative bodies, etc. are grouped together because of specific characteristics or where they live).

	What are the impacts of your policy or proposal? Please place an X in the relevant box			Why have you come to this decision? Please provide an explanation and any supporting evidence.	Considerations to mitigate negative impact(s) and/or secure positive impact(s)
	Positive impact(s)	Negative impact(s)	No impact		
Socio-economic disadvantage			X	All individuals supported by the service have a financial assessment undertaken (where BCBC hold deputyships for individuals) to ensure the changes are fair and can be afforded. The financial safeguarding team regularly ensure individuals we hold deputyships for are in receipt of the correct level of benefit income, as well as considerations around the level of savings the individual has, as these all form and identify the level of non-residential weekly charge, capped at £100/week, the individual will contribute. Officers will work to identify a method of implementation for a 'no-detriment' approach for	All supported individuals within the service will receive a level of ongoing financial oversight from the Shared Lives Project Workers and from BCBC's Financial Safeguarding Team. For existing Shared Lives carers, the protection of Band 1 income levels will be managed through discussions with relevant BCBC teams and colleagues to determine how this effectively can be implemented.

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

				the current Band 1 carers to ensure their rates are protected.	
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Welsh language

Consider how your policy or proposal ensures that you are working in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011), to ensure the Welsh Language is not treated less favourably than the English Language, and that every opportunity is taken to promote the Welsh Language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community.

	What are the impacts of your policy or proposal for persons to use the Welsh language and in treating the Welsh language less favourably than the English language? Please place an X in the relevant box			Why have you come to this decision? Please provide an explanation and any supporting evidence.	Record of mitigation in order to: - secure positive or more positive effects - avoid adverse effects or secure less adverse effects
	Positive impact(s)	Negative impact(s)	No impact		
Will the policy or proposal impact on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language			X	This proposal has no impact on an individuals choice to use the Welsh language for their service or to communicate in Welsh.	
Will the policy or proposal treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language			X	This proposal has no impact on whether the Welsh language is used less favourably than English.	

Wider impact

Cumulative impact

What is the cumulative impact of this policy or proposal on different protected groups when considering other key decisions affecting these groups made by the organisation? (You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making, eg, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, eg, disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc)

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

Improving the fairness and equity of financial arrangements within the Shared Lives service should help to generate wider public awareness of the service, and potentially have a strong positive impact in terms of recruiting Shared Lives carers, enabling greater capacity to support more people with a disability in a positive way.

There is no wider or cumulative negative impact on individuals with a shared protected characteristic as a result of these proposals. All individuals affected by this have had financial assessments undertaken to ensure the financial viability of the proposals.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty consists of a general equality duty and specific duties, which help authorities to meet the general duty.

The aim of the general equality duty is to integrate considerations of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of public authorities. In summary, those subject to the equality duty, must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't
- Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't

How does this policy or proposal demonstrate you have given due regard to the general equality duty?

This proposal relates specifically to individuals supported by the Shared Lives partnership, and the carers who provide the care, and will be applied universally across this service.

Therefore, there will be no unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, due to the policy ensuring that everyone, regardless of protected characteristics, is able to make their views known.

Equal opportunities and fostering of good relations between those with protected characteristics and those who don't is ensured by this universal stance.

Procurement and partnerships

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires all public authorities to consider the needs of protected characteristics when designing and delivering public services, including where this is done in partnership with other organisations or through procurement of services. The Welsh Language Standards also require all public authorities to consider the effects of any policy decision, or change in service delivery, on the Welsh language, which includes any work done in partnership or by third parties. We must also ensure we consider the Socio-economic Duty when planning major procurement and commissioning decisions to consider how such arrangements can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

Will this policy or proposal be carried out wholly or partly by contractors or partners?

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

	Please place an X in the relevant box:
Yes	X
No	

If yes what steps will you take to comply with the General Equality Duty, Welsh Language Legislation and the Socio-Economic Duty in regard to procurement and/or partnerships?

	Steps taken to ensure compliance:
General Equality Duty	The partner is Vale of Glamorgan Council who work to the same Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as BCBC.
Welsh Language legislation	The partner is Vale of Glamorgan Council who work to the same Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as BCBC.
Socio-economic duty	The partner is Vale of Glamorgan Council who work to the same Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as BCBC.

Record of recommendation and decision

What is the recommendation for the policy or proposal based on assessment of impact on protected characteristics, Welsh Language and socio-economic impact?

If you chose to continue with the policy or proposal in its current form even though negative impacts have been identified a full justification should be provided and actions should be identified with the aim to reduce negative impacts.

	Please place an X in the relevant box	Please explain fully the reasons for this judgement.
Continue with the policy or proposal in its current form as no negative impacts have been identified	X	Mitigations are being implemented to ensure the current financial arrangements are maintained for existing Band 1 Carers, and also to phase the implementation of increased individual contributions. The increased individual contribution is a positive impact as this provides a more realistic contribution and is then equitable with others in different services.
Continue with the policy or proposal in its current form even though negative impacts have been identified		
Do not continue with this policy or proposal as it is not possible to address the negative impacts.		

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

Monitoring action plan and review

Equality Impact assessment Action Plan

It is essential that you now complete the action plan. Include any considerations you have identified to mitigate negative impact(s) and/or secure positive impact(s) on protected characteristics, socio-economic impact and Welsh Language. Once your action plan is complete, please ensure that the actions are mainstreamed into the relevant Service Development Plan.

Action	Lead Person	Target for completion	Resources needed	Service Development plan for this action
<i>E.G. Information about the service to be available in BSL video on the website</i>	<i>Service manager</i>	<i>End of financial year</i>	<i>£XX Staff time/resource</i>	<i>X Service Plan</i>
Protect the rates for existing Band 1 carers	Commissioning Officers	January 2027	Staff time to implement and communicate with finance colleagues to ensure all existing band 1 carers receive their existing rates.	Work has been undertaken as part of the revisions to the proposals following the public consultation. These are to be presented for approval to the OVSC and Cabinet meetings scheduled.
Implement phased introduction of increased individual contributions to weekly food and utility bills	Commissioning Officers.	January 2027	Staff time to implement and communicate with finance colleagues to ensure the appropriate phasing of the increases to individual contributions are implemented.	Work has been undertaken as part of the revisions to the proposals following the public consultation. These are to be presented for approval to the OVSC and Cabinet meetings scheduled.

Appendix 7 - Full Shared Lives Banding Proposal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

Please outline how and when this EIA will be monitored in the future and when a review will take place:

Monitoring arrangements:	Date of Review:
Initial review to ensure no additional areas of concern regarding the financial impact on individuals or carers have been identified.	December 2026
Annual review to ensure continued no detriment and/or financial impact on both band 1 carers and individuals supported	From April 2027

Approval

Date Full EIA completed:	20/08/2026
Name of the person completing the Full EIA:	Joe Boyle
Position of the person completing the Full EIA:	Commissioning and Service Development Officer

Approved by (Head of Service or Corporate Director):	Claire Marchant
Date Full EIA approved:	20/08/2026

Publication of EIA and feedback to consultation groups

It is important that the results of this impact assessment are published in a user friendly accessible format.

It is also important that you feedback to your consultation groups with the actions that you are taking to address their concerns and to mitigate against any potential adverse impact.

When complete, this form must be signed off and retained by the service and a copy should also be sent to equalities@bridgend.gov.uk

Where a full EIA has been completed this should be included as an appendix with the relevant cabinet report and therefore will become available publically on the website.

If you have queries in relation to the use of this toolkit please contact the Equalities Team on 01656 643664 or equalities@bridgend.gov.uk

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Meeting of:	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	10 SEPTEMBER 2026
Report Title:	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL, REGULATORY AND ELECTORAL SERVICES
Responsible Officer:	MERYL LAWRENCE SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER – SCRUTINY
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The work of the Overview & 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.
Executive Summary:	The Council's Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee. 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.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Present the Committee with the Draft 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 for information the Corporate Performance Quarter 4/Year End 2025-26 reported to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) on 27 July 2026, within the remit of this Committee.
- e) Present the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet (**Appendix B**) to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings;
- f) 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 13 May 2026, 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 2027, 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 2027.
- 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.
- 3.7 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 Committee is asked to note the content of the [Corporate Performance Quarter 4/Year End 2025-26 report](#), [the Corporate Performance Dashboard Quarter 4 2025-26](#) and the [Regulatory Tracker updated for Quarter 4 2025-26](#) within the remit of this Committee and have regard to the dashboard and the tracker when considering the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

3.11 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. Recommendations

- 9.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- a) Consider and approve the Draft 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 content of the Corporate Performance Quarter 4/Year End 2025-26 report, the Corporate Performance Dashboard Quarter 4 2025-26 and the Regulatory Tracker updated for Quarter 4 2025-26 within the remit of this Committee and have regard to the dashboard and the tracker when considering the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

- e) Note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in **Appendix B** to track outstanding responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings;
- f) 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.

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Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2026-27 Forward Work Programme

Monday, 8 June 2026 at 10.00am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
'Our Bravery Brought Justice' – the Bridgend response to the North Wales Child Practice Review		<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing; Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; and Head of Children and Family Services.

Thursday, 9 July 2026 at 10.00am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Shared Lives	Pre-Decision and mid consultation	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; and Commissioning and Service Development Officer.

Thursday 10 September 2026 at 10.00am		
Report Topics	Any Specific Information Requested	Invitees
Social Services Annual Report 2025-26	Pre-Decision	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing; <u>Officers</u> 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 & Improvement.
Social Services Representations and Complaints 2025-26	Pre-Decision	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing; <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing; and Compliments and Complaints Resolution Manager.
Shared Lives	Pre-Decision. To include: a. Detail of the work being undertaken by the Financial Safeguarding Team to include the impact of the proposed changes on individuals' disposable income and affordability; b. Detail of all of the proposed changes to terms and conditions; c. Full cost analysis of the cost of a Shared Lives Placement compared to alternative accommodation such as Supported Living, etc.; d. The rationale for aligning individuals' contributions to the same level as those in the Vale of Glamorgan who receive a higher level of Local Housing Allowance; e. The outcome of discussions with legal regarding a possible two-tier approach to ensure Band 1 carers are at no detriment; f. Detail regarding how each carer and service user were consulted and how the impact on each was presented and explained to them and their responses; g. The consultation paper and all anonymised responses to the consultation as an Appendix; and h. The Banding criteria as an Appendix.	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; and Commissioning and Service Development Officer.

APPENDIX A

Monday, 9 November 2026 at 10.00am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report 2025-26		<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> 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
Provision of Accommodation Based Regulated Support Services in Bridgend	Post implementation progress report To include information setting out the provision of accommodation based regulated support services in Bridgend to include the following: - whether they are private, public or charity sector; - how staff are contracted; and - the ownership of the buildings.	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Adult Social Care; and Group Manager – Commissioning.
Partnership with AWEN	To include MTFS saving proposal.	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing <u>External</u> Representatives from Awen

Thursday, 4 February 2027 at 10.00am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Support for Care Leavers	Including input from Housing and Employability.	<u>Cabinet Member</u>

APPENDIX A

	The Committee have requested that Care Experienced young people be invited for this item. Joint report between Social Services, Health and Wellbeing and the Communities and Housing Directorates	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing. <u>External</u> Care Leaver invitees
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Thursday, 4 March 2027 at 10.00am

Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Integrated Health and Social Care Services	To include: Progress against the Regional Partnership Agreement	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing. <u>External</u>
Future Arrangements for Advocacy for Adults and Children		<u>Cabinet Member</u> Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing. <u>External</u>

Items to be Scheduled to the Committee's Forward Work Programme

- Review of the Fostering Service – to include actions arising from Elimination of Profit Legislation. June 2027
- External Review of Strength Based Outcome Focused Practice Model being embedded into Adult Social Care – post inspection of Adult Social Care in 2026/27
- Further Report regarding the Community Hubs Strategy (at the appropriate time in 2026/27)

Items to be considered by a Working Group in the first instance when available:

- Welsh Government Review of Safeguarding Boards; and
- Review of Section 5 of Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Briefings and Workshops:

Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Regional Operating Model of the Emergency Duty Team	Out of hours operation	Representatives from RCT
Overview – Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate / Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act	Attendance from: Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing Head of Adult Social Care Head of Children and Family Services Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing	To be scheduled post Annual Council depending on changes of Membership to Committee
The Replacement System for CareDirector (WCCIS)	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.	Members and officers for the Briefing and Workshop – TBD. To be scheduled in partnership with IT and Head of Transformation and Digital – once appointed
Use of Artificial Intelligence within Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate	The Committee recommended 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.	This will form part of the Digital Strategy and to be scheduled in partnership with IT and Head of Transformation and Digital – once appointed

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Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING ACTION SHEET 2026-2027

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee recommended that a letter be sent to Welsh Government asking them to consider making safeguarding training mandatory for all school governors.	Scrutiny/Chair of Committee	Letter sent. Response awaited.	
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee expressed concern regarding the level of Chair of Governor attendance at the termly meetings arranged by the Head of Learning and whether they are undertaking the mandatory training and recommended that the Corporate Director write to all Chairs of Governors sharing a copy of the report and setting out their roles and responsibilities.	Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People	Recommendations circulated requesting response to be provided. Chased.	
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee discussed whether routes to safeguarding were clear to all school Governors and parents and recommended that this be a standing item on the Agenda of the Chair of Governor termly meetings arranged by the Head of Learning and that routes to safeguarding are highlighted to parents in a newsletter and on parental apps.	Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People	Recommendations circulated requesting response to be provided. Chased.	
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee recommended that the report be shared with Members of the	Scrutiny	ACTIONED – Report shared.	Complete

APPENDIX B

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information.			
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee referred to the <i>Training on Child Sexual Abuse Awareness & Understanding Men who Sexually Abuse Children</i> set out in the Action Plan appended to the report and recommended that the reference to <i>Men</i> be changed to <i>People</i> both in the title of the training and its content.	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing/ Head of Children and Family Services	ACTIONED – Response and information circulated 3 September 2026.	Follow link here
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee discussed the importance and responsibility of the role of Members as Corporate Parents and recommended that consideration be given to making the Corporate Parenting training mandatory and that the training is repeated for all Members shortly.	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing/ Head of Children and Family Services	ACTIONED – Response and information circulated 3 September 2026.	Follow link here
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee requested copies of the responses from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, South Wales Police and Welsh Government to the North Wales Child Practice Review.	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing/ Head of Children and Family Services	ACTIONED – Response and information circulated 3 September 2026.	Follow link here
8 Jun 26	'Our Bravery Brought Justice'	The Committee requested detail of how safeguarding leads in schools are selected.	Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People	Recommendations circulated requesting response to be provided. Chased.	
8 Jun 26	Forward Work Programme Update	The Committee requested that the following items be added to the	Scrutiny/Chair of Committee.	Items added to the Committee's	Complete.

APPENDIX B

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		Committee's Forward Work Programme to be reviewed by a Working Group in the first instance: a. Welsh Government Review of Safeguarding Boards; and b. Review of Section 5 of Wales Safeguarding Procedures.		Forward Work Programme.	
9 July 26	Shared Lives	Given that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is designed to cover the cheapest 30% of properties in the rental area and the disparity between the cheapest market rent of properties in Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, the Committee expressed concern that residents of Bridgend in private accommodation are at detriment and recommended a review of LHA in line with the Consumer Price Index.	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing / Corporate Director – Finance and Transformation	ACTIONED – Response and information circulated 3 September 2026.	Follow link here
9 July 26	Shared Lives	The Committee expressed pride and gratitude for the Shared Lives Service, that many people were likely to be unaware of it and recommended that a briefing be brought to full Council to raise awareness, which may assist with recruitment of more carers and growing the service.	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing	ACTIONED – Response and information circulated 3 September 2026.	Follow link here
9 July 26	Shared Lives	The Committee expressed concern regarding the potential impact of the proposed changes on individuals and Band 1 carers, acknowledged that	Scrutiny / Corporate Director – Social Services and	ACTIONED – Included in Report Request and in Report before the	Follow link here

APPENDIX B

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		options to explore the no detriment approach were ongoing, requested that the Shared Lives report be put on their Forward Work Programme for September and that the following be included within the scope of the report: a. Detail of the work being undertaken by the Financial Safeguarding Team to include the impact of the proposed changes on individuals' disposable income and affordability; b. Detail of all of the proposed changes to terms and conditions; c. Full cost analysis of the cost of a Shared Lives Placement compared to alternative accommodation such as Supported Living, etc.; d. The rationale for aligning individuals' contributions to the same level as those in the Vale of Glamorgan who receive a higher level of Local Housing Allowance; e. The outcome of discussions with legal regarding a possible two-tier approach to ensure Band 1 carers are at no detriment; f. Detail regarding how each carer and service user were consulted and how the impact on each was presented and explained to them and their responses;	Wellbeing / Commissioning and Service Development Officer	Committee – 10 September 2026.	

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		g. The consultation paper and all anonymised responses to the consultation as an Appendix; and h. The Banding criteria as an Appendix.			

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