

SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE

Director of Social Services Annual Report

2022/23



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

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1. Directors Introduction

How Well We Have Performed

This is my third annual report as Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing in Bridgend. This report is prepared as a statutory requirement under the Code of Practice issued under Part 8 of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. It describes how Bridgend County Borough Council have exercised our functions, our performance during the year, and developments and action taken to further improve our services and support.

I would like to start this annual report by paying tribute to the workforce who have been tireless in delivering wellbeing, prevention, social work and social care services to the most vulnerable citizens in our county borough. These endeavours have been in the context of unprecedented levels of contacts in children's social care and safeguarding activity in children's and adult's social care and more challenging work in all service areas as the medium to long term impact of the pandemic and the immediate impact of the cost of living crisis are evident in the lives of our citizens. I would like to thank everyone who works in these services for their commitment, caring, passion and compassion for doing the right thing often in very challenging circumstances. Despite these challenges the joy of social care, the impact good social services and wellbeing has on people's lives, continues to inspire and motivate all who work in, and are connected to it.

I would also like to thank Councillors and colleagues across the Council for the corporate priority afforded to social services. This has been evident in the number of areas including the leadership of the Corporate Management Board to the Improving Outcomes for Children Board; working with human resources to develop and deliver innovative workforce plans such as international recruitment of social workers, working with colleagues in Communities to develop new residential services and electric vehicles for care workers, working with early help workforce in the Council to support children and families preventatively, and with finance to develop business cases to address the significant service and financial pressures evident. It takes a whole village to raise a child, it certainly takes a whole Council to ensure good social services and the evidence of this One Council approach has been key in improving regulatory confidence in the Council.

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My thanks also extend to our partners - third sector partners in Bridgend and our commissioned providers, as well as our partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) region. Together we have worked to keep adults and children well, connected and supported. There are many examples of innovation which have reduced the need for statutory interventions and the work of Halo, Awen and BAVO has been key in supporting the wellbeing of adults and children, families and carers. The increase in need has impacted on all partners and we have always committed to 'doing the right thing' together and many people have been safeguarded and well supported.

It is important for me to acknowledge in this introduction the leadership of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTM RSB). The RSB plays a fundamental role in commissioning and publishing Child Practice Reviews. In November 2022 the Child T Child Practice Review was published which set out the learning for all agencies following the tragic murder of Logan Mwangi. The RSB's leadership, not just of the review's commission and publication, but its oversight of the implementation of the actions to address the recommendations of the review, and its work with all partners to gain trust and confidence of our communities in safeguarding arrangements has been fundamental to improvements made. An open, transparent and supportive culture is fundamental to effective safeguarding. The tragic events of 2021 impacted all partners and all our workforces considerably and we have worked together to challenge and support each other as we committed to learning and improving.

I would also, and most importantly, like to pay tribute to the people we work with and alongside – the children, families, adults and carers of Bridgend County Borough. Despite the challenges, the joy of social care has been more evident this year and I hope that some of this excellent work is evident in some of the case studies within this report and there is growing optimism for the future. The people we work with and alongside inspire daily. We have really focussed on hearing and acting on the voice of people in our individual practice, but also on participation and engagement in our strategic work. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has been led, and launched by our children and young people and our Learning Disability Action Plan co-produced with people with learning disabilities. Our young carers ambassadors are young carers themselves and are key in supporting their peers in schools. This is really great evidence that we are at our best when we recognise the skills and capabilities people have in their own lives and support them to shine!

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A Significant Improvement Agenda

In 2022/23, the Social Services and Well-being Directorate has had a clear focus on continuous improvement of quality and performance. The context of significantly increasing need and demand in children's social care, unprecedented challenges in the health and social care system at the interface between community and hospital, and a fragile workforce position in adult and children's social care.

In this last year we have needed to make significant improvements at pace in key areas most notably children's social care where Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) expressed their 'serious concerns' to the Council in August 2022, following a Performance Evaluation Inspection in May 2022 and a critical report regarding a BCBC children's care home. Rapid improvements have been made in key areas, and CIW confirmed they no longer had 'serious concerns' but considered that children's social care 'requires improvement in an improvement check undertaken in November 2022. Progress was noted - 9 areas identified 'Improvements made, further action is required' and 2 areas identified 'Significant improvements made and must be sustained'. The Local Authority was deemed to be an authority that 'requires improvement' in its children's social care. A focus on ensuring sustained improvement, embedding new models of practice, enhancing the impact of targeted services which prevent the need for statutory intervention Key to delivering all these improvements is a well-supported, motivated workforce.

The key messages in this report are:

- people are experts in their own lives – genuine co-production, listening and acting on what they tell is important to frontline practice and service developments;
- the importance of data, evidence and analysis to good and effective services and a culture of continuous improvement;
- a culture which is open and transparent, emphasises compassionate leadership is fundamental to improvement – being firm, fair and always kind;

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- that despite an unprecedented increase in contacts, and all levels of safeguarding and child protection activity in children's social care, quantitative performance has been good and shows the exceptional endeavours of our frontline workforce;
- more work is needed to consistently improve qualitative performance and reduce the reliance on agency workforce in children's social care;
- there are many positives in adult social care, with longstanding and effective integrated community teams, good mental health services and outcome focussed commissioned services;
- there have been some challenges in adult services, and pressures across the whole health and social care system, including the timeliness of social work assessments and social care services and there is a need to 'reset' the way we work in learning disabilities and our reablement services;
- our health and social care services for people living with frailty and dementia are operating close to full capacity – in the care home and care and support at home sectors – and we need to grow and develop these services;
- the importance of getting the fundamentals of social care right – excellent social work practice, good supervision and timely services which support people to live as independently as possibly, connected to their families and communities;
- we need time to embed our newly launched models of practice - Signs of Safety in children's social care and Outcome Focussed, Strength Based in adult social care - and our new supervision and quality assurance polices;
- building on the many strengths in our prevention and wellbeing and early help services there is a strong case for prioritising resources in a targeted way prior to needs escalating and requiring more intensive intervention, recognising that Bridgend is a county in which we support more people through statutory social care services than some comparable authorities;
- the value of all our social services and wellbeing workforce and, in a challenged labour market, the need for our workforce plans and actions to reflect the culture, practice and commitment to work/life balance that is fundamental to the wellbeing, retention and recruitment of our workforce;
- the need to align our service, workforce and financial plans and strategies to sustainably achieve the very best outcomes we can in a resourced constrained environment.

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Many Strengths to Build on

We have clear purposes for social services and wellbeing in Bridgend.

Our purpose is:

We exist to exercise our legal and moral duties to help those who need care and support in Bridgend to have the best possible life.

The principles which guide us are:

- Promoting choice and control for the people we work with by actively listening, and acting on what people tell us matters to them.
- Treating people with respect for them, their culture, their characteristics, beliefs and language.
- Being outcomes focused and strengths-based in understanding and acting upon what
- matters to the people we support.
- Respecting people's privacy and dignity.
  Taking relationship-based approaches with people, helping them to have autonomy
- and reach their full potential.
  Safeguarding and protecting people whenever needed.
- Seeking greater equality and inclusion for people who need care and support.
  Working in constructive and creative professional partnership with our colleagues.

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We recognise the importance of culture – how we work together and with us – as important as strategies and plans:

- Delivering meaningful involvement and engagement of people, families and communities in our work together. “Nothing about me without me.”
- Building a stable, supported, well-motivated workforce, good retention and recruitment, leading to an optimal mix of skills and capabilities, with a reputation of being a safe, supportive, reflective organisation that professionals want to work for.
- Demonstrating compassionate leadership which gives clarity, structure, excellent supervision, high support and constructive challenge.
- Developing teams which have the capacity to fulfil their purpose and responsibilities and are good places to work and develop professional practice.
- Delivering practice that is outcome-focused and strengths-based, building on strong relationships with families and professional partners.
- Having quality assurance and performance systems which promote excellent practice within a culture of transparent learning and continuous improvement.
- Working as an integrated, seamless ‘whole system’ across the Council, statutory partners, the third sector and commissioned providers.
- Recognising our limitations, constructive and straightforward reporting of problems and genuine learning from mistakes.

We are developing strategic plans for children’s and adult services which will bring together the actions to deliver sustainable improvement over the next 3 years. In line with our principles, these plans will be informed by significant engagement with a range of stakeholders. The plans are based on 7 priority areas all of which need to progress to move to overall performance to a ‘good’ judgement over the next 3 years. These themes are:

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- Hearing and acting on the voice of children and families, adults and carers
- Securing a stable, well-supported, motivated and permanent workforce
- Improving practice
- Maximising the impact of our services and interventions
- A more effective response to children and families, adults and carers with complex needs
- Seamless working with partners
- Better intelligence and information systems

In children's social care a number of improvements were noted in CIW's Improvement Check – published 15/02/23. Strengths identified in key areas:

- Partnership at a strategic and operational level
- The voice of the child evident in practice and in service developments
- Staff feel well supported
- Strong and effective governance
- Improved performance management and oversight

In addition, the Council's independent advisor on children's social care Phil Hodgson noted:

'' Performance within Bridgend Childrens Social Care is good given the volume and context of the increased activity, and the staffing and workforce pressures. This performance reflects well on managers and practitioners across the whole of the Bridgend Childrens Social Care Services, who are doing an amazing job in very difficult circumstances".

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In children's social care we will be building on the following strengths:

- Excellent quantitative performance across key performance indicators despite exponential increase in levels of activity;
- Corporate parenting strategy co-produced and launch led by our children and young people; progress recognised as genuinely sector leading in listening and acting on what matters to our children;
- Positive progress with implementing 'Signs of Safety' as the model of practice and back to basics training evaluated positively;
- Corporate support to ensure that all vacant posts are covered and most teams operating above establishment to meet need in a timely way and keep caseloads at a reasonable level;
- International recruitment – up to 20 social workers from overseas are being welcomed to Bridgend;
- Agreed position with other Welsh local authorities on a Memorandum of Cooperation to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of the engagement of agency social workers;
- Significant improvements achieved in Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Information Advice and Assistance service – high levels of performance and low caseloads in all parts of the service – one service approach
- Social work support officer roles implemented across children's social care;
- Good progress to improve practice in identifying and acting on the exploitation of children, establishing new partnership working arrangements and permanent exploitation posts successfully recruited;
- CIW noted significant improvement checks in how the voice of children is reflected in practice and improvements in management oversight;
- Significantly improved situational awareness through performance dashboards at team, service, and whole service level, supported by effective corporate governance;
- Increased offer and uptake of advocacy;
- Systematic approach to acting on learning from audits and reviews and good progress in addressing recommendations in a timely way.

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In adult social care:

- Bridgend adult social care has been high performing and leading practice in the integration of health and social care in Wales with an experienced professional workforce and focus on continuous improvement;
- Excellent examples of strength based, outcome focussed practice evident across adult social care at the practice launch and in the Continuous Improvement Group which demonstrate that there are many strengths in social work practice to build on;
- Learning disability services are highly effective in hearing the voice of people with care and support needs, and ensuring that people, drive the development of services; a person with learning disabilities now chairs the local planning group;
- Significant improvements made in reducing the number of people waiting for a social work assessment and improving the timeliness of assessments;
- Some improvements in reducing waits for care and support and improved recruitment into in-house services following a review of rota arrangements with the aim of eliminating 'split shifts' and increasing flexibility of hours for the frontline workforce;
- Electric vehicles being trialled in in-house care and support staff to support reduction in carbon emissions;
- Successfully achieving the switch of analogue to digital to support the modernisation of the telecare service which is supporting 2600 people to remain as independent as possible;
- Development of integrated dementia service at Bridgend Resource Centre which is supporting people with advancing dementia and giving carers a much needed break;
- Successful transfer of G4S support staff into the Council's in-house care and support service;
- Excellent integrated practice to support adults with mental ill health acknowledged in CIW/HIW inspection of mental health services in North Community Mental Health Team;

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- Positive regulatory inspections across Council provided regulated adult care and support services in Bridgend with CIW reports reflecting that the standard of care and support provided across the services is of a good standard with good relationships between staff and individuals receiving care and support;
- Positive work with care home providers to develop new provision to improve access to specialist care through the commissioning of additional specialist capacity in Abergarw.

Across children and adult services we have worked to develop a consistent leadership and management culture and approach to workforce across the directorate. Our strengths include:

- A commitment to recognise and celebrate strengths that already exist by appreciating, recognising and learning from good practice;
- Modelling a culture of compassionate leadership which is firm, fair and kind;
- Launch of Social Worker and Occupational Therapy Charter on World Social Work Day
- Be-spoke management and leadership development programme underway which focussed on quality and performance, supported by our improvement partner;
- New supervision and quality assurance policies;
- Management and leadership development programme with improvement partner is focussed on quality and performance;
- A commitment to research in practice supported through Community Care Inform.

Our prevention and well-being services are leading edge in Wales in their approach to enabling people to be healthy, well and connected. These programmes have increasingly focussed on the most vulnerable, preventing escalation of their needs. There are examples of positive practice working with people of all ages in the County Borough including:

- The active young people's development programme;
- Discovery days for children with disabilities;

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- The development of a young carers network, young carers ambassadors and expansion of benefits through the young carer's ID card;
- Supporting employment in our partnership with Awen Cultural Trust in Wood-B and B-leaf;
- Local community co-ordinators connecting people to what is available in their communities and developing opportunities where they don't exist;
- Our Bevan exemplar super agers programme;
- The feel good for life programme in partnership with Halo Leisure for people living with dementia and their carers.

In summary, Bridgend has many strengths – there are good relationships with partners locally and regionally – the NHS, South Wales Police, probation and our social care providers. Prevention and Wellbeing services have been recognised as genuinely 'best in class'. There is a strong history of integrated services for older people – the team around Mrs. Jones which are at the leading edge of integration. There are a good range of mental health services and good practice in this area. Children's services have improved in the last year. The social services commissioning team has good relationships with social care providers There is also well evidenced co-production of people taking a lead in designing their services, e.g. learning disabilities, carers networks and care experienced children. People's voice is more evident in practice, and it is pleasing to see the increase in advocacy. All these strengths are underpinned by workforce who are are hugely committed and passionate about doing the right thing and making a difference to people's lives.

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Our Improvement Agenda - Commitment to Sustainable Improvement

It is important to acknowledge that in 2022/23 Bridgend Social Services and Wellbeing had to demonstrate significant improvements in a number of key areas. This was most evident in children's social care where the CIW Performance Evaluation Inspection of May 2022 highlighted areas where rapid improvement was needed. Whilst some of the challenges we faced in Bridgend have been experienced in other parts of Wales, there have been particular issues faced in Bridgend children's services. Critically there has been a very significant increase in contacts and safeguarding activity and challenges in retaining and recruiting a permanent workforce. Working with our improvement partner, the Institute of Public Care, we have considered the experience of other local authorities who have had high profile tragic child deaths and the experience of children's social care in Bridgend is similar.

The Child T (Logan Mwangi) child practice review was published in November 2022. The Council and partners committed to working tirelessly to reflect on its findings and ensure the actions identified from the recommendations were progressed in a timely way. We acted quickly and strengthened our operational and strategic work with partners and this was recognised by CIW in their performance evaluation inspection of children's services in May 2022 and which noted 'The local authority has taken action to instigate immediate learning following recent critical incidents. The Cabinet approved a plan to deliver immediate improvements in February 2022 which focussed on 5 areas: practice, workforce, provision, partnerships and hearing and acting on the voice of the child. The immediate actions have been delivered and a new sustainability plan considered by Cabinet in Autumn 2023 to support sustainable improvements, and address the service and financial challenges.

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Strategically, the Improving Outcomes for Children Board chaired by the Chief Executive has provided effective corporate governance to the improvement programme whilst fortnightly political oversight has been exercised through gold, silver and bronze arrangements. As we move to the next phase of the improvement good corporate governance will continue to be required. The independent advice of Phil Hodgson, an expert in children's social care , has been key in giving robust analysis of the focus of the improvement programme and this independent advice will continue in 2023/24. The issues and risks that the Council will need to focus on in delivering the next phase of the improvement programme are:

- Fragility of workforce whilst improvements have been achieved due to operating above establishment and significantly over budget. The children's social worker workforce position at the end of 2022/23 was:
  - Permanent establishment in children's social care is: 122.91 fte.
  - Service is currently operating at 29% above establishment to meet all statutory duties in a timely way.
  - 20% vacancies in the permanent workforce.
  - All vacant posts (and more) are covered.
  - 38% of the current children's social worker workforce is filled by agency.
- Even with this additional capacity the caseloads in some parts of the service – safeguarding localities and independent reviewing officers have been higher than the standards we set ourselves and we are committed to their safe reduction;
- Caseloads at the 'front door' of children's services (IAA and MASH) have been kept at good practice levels. A 'managed' agency team has been key to regulatory and partner confidence and to achieving a timely and quality safeguarding response. This is not a sustainable longer term workforce solution. A permanent financial and workforce solution is needed to allay staff anxiety regarding the Council's commitment to sustaining good practice case load levels;
- The relatively low levels of permanent workforce impacts on the experience of families we work with - teams with higher agency workforce experience higher number of informal complaints, and families experience more frequent changes of social worker;

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- The unprecedented levels of contact with children's social care has resulted in high levels of safeguarding and child protection activity. There is a need to 'rebalance' the way we work so highly skilled preventative services work with families with a range of needs to support more families, who consent to work with us and are motivated to change, to have their needs met outside of statutory services. There are high numbers of children in Bridgend are care experienced, are registered on the child protection register and have care and support needs compared with other parts of Wales.
- Signs of Safety implementation is going well but is at a relatively early stage; there is evidence that whilst quantitative performance is good, quality of practice can be variable, and consistently working to our practice model is key to improvement;
- New policies which have been developed – supervision and quality assurance need to be implemented fully in all parts of the service;
- Sufficiency of placements – residential and foster carers - is a significant challenge. In common with other Welsh Local Authorities, Bridgend has experienced more circumstances where we have had to support children in settings which are 'Operating Without Registration' which means additional risks need to be managed.

The actions required over the next 3 years to sustainably improve outcomes for children and families in Bridgend will be set out in a 3 year plan to be presented to Cabinet in Autumn 2023. The plan is based on detailed evidence and analysis of service, financial and workforce plans needed to achieve 'good' services within the timescales of the plan. Regulators are positive about the commitment to develop a sustainability plan and prioritise resources.

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In adult social care, there has been an increase in contacts in the last year, but a slight reduction in assessments and the number of people with care and support plans. The winter of 2022/23 was particularly pressured for the whole of the health and social care system and Bridgend, as other areas, experienced significant challenge in always meeting people's need for care and support in a timely way. At times during the last year there were also longer waits for social work assessment than is optimal. Whilst social worker assessment waiting lists have largely been addressed, there remains a challenge in the number of people having their assessed care needs met in a timely way. The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on people with care and support needs, including impacts on physical and mental health and wellbeing of extended periods of lockdown is still evident. The issues and risks in adult social care that the Council will focus on addressing are:

- Re-setting reablement services – reablement services are highly effective at reducing or eliminating the need for longer term care and support. There is need to increase reablement capacity to pre-pandemic levels to better mitigate the need for long term care
- A review of learning disability services will inform the transformation of practice and service delivery so people can be supported to live as independently as possible, in their own homes and communities;
- Waiting lists for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards authorisations and renewals have risen and a move from UK government to delay (indefinitely) the implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards means the Council needs to implement a plan to sustainably ensure these safeguards are in place in a timely way;
- Implementation of a review of the social work operating model for adult social care in Bridgend which will ensure the Council is best able to support people;
- Pressure across the health and social care system continues and operates at 95% capacity at all times – Welsh Government require 'further faster' changes to the health and care system to mitigate future winter crises; many intermediate care services are dependent on regional grant funding which is being reviewed and requires tapering and match funding;
- Whilst there have been improvements, retention and recruitment of the care workforce remains a challenge.

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Stronger in Partnership

Partnership remains key to the effectiveness of social services and wellbeing in Bridgend. There are strong and effective strategic and operational safeguarding partnerships under the leadership of the CTM RSB of which I am the vice chair. There is strong involvement in Bridgend at all levels of RSB structures. At a regional level there is an executive steering group which provides timely oversight of safeguarding performance and holds statutory partners, including Bridgend County Borough Council, to account. At a Bridgend County Borough Council level there is a Joint Operational Group and an Interface Group which ensure any issues between partners can be resolved in a timely way. There is a culture of openness and transparency, challenge and support, recognising the impact of the increases in need across all partners. This provides significantly enhanced situational awareness and management oversight, using data and evidence to drive continuous improvement.

A focus of partnership working is support for workforce. Relationships with social care providers have remained strong and effective in the last year. The Council has undertaken an ‘open book’ exercise to ensure that a fair price of care is paid to care homes in the county borough and continues to have strong and effective relationships with social care providers working with all parts of the population.

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board (CTM RPB) is chaired by the Deputy Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council. The RPB has undertaken an assessment of the needs of the population of the region and developed an area plan to address these needs. All parts of the population have seen an increasing level of need for wellbeing, care and support following the Covid-19 pandemic and regional priorities are committed to working together to address gaps in services. The RPB has also developed a Market Stability Report which identifies commissioning priorities. The RPB is very effective at engaging with citizens across the region in hackathons which ensure the voice of people is strongly heard and driving priorities.

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What next?

It is clear from the areas where there is strong and effective performance that the key success factors are: clarity of purpose, strong and effective leadership and management at every level, a well-supported, well-motivated workforce, strong partnership working, high standards of performance management and quality assurance and acting upon the voice and experience of people we are here to serve. All these factors are evident in parts of social services and wellbeing in Bridgend, most notably prevention and wellbeing, corporate parenting and Bridgend's integrated adult services and adult mental health services which have all been recognised independently and externally as highly performing.

There is good practice in all parts of the service but it is important to acknowledge the improvement journey in children's social care and parts of adult services – there is an improvement journey. Significant progress has been made in the last year but there remain fragility, particularly around the workforce and financial position which combined with high levels of service pressure mean that the aligned service and financial plans that will be considered in 2023/24 are critical to sustainable improvement.

Models of practice need to be embedded and we need to continue to focus on supporting and growing our permanent workforce. More people can be supported to have their needs met preventatively – this is not only the right thing to do but invariably the most cost effective course of action. There us robust evidence in areas such as reablement and edge of care services to this effect and we need to target scarce resources where they will impact most.

Our thematic priorities for improvement can therefore be summarised as:

- Hearing and acting on the voice of children and families, adults and carers
- Securing a stable, well-supported, motivated and permanent workforce
- Improving practice
- Maximising the impact of our services and interventions
- A more effective response to children and families, adult and carers, with complex needs
- Seamless working with partners
- Better intelligence and information systems

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Delivering these priorities requires leadership and management that is compassionate and a culture which continues to be open and transparent in respect of the challenges we face, supports improvement and prioritises what is important. There will be difficult times inevitably in the year ahead given the level of need that is evident and the resource and workforce challenges. There will be many more opportunities to celebrate what is working well. Our ability to manage through the unprecedented levels of demand in parts of our service is dedication the dedication, commitment, and efforts of our staff, not only in social services and wellbeing but across the whole of the Council and in partner agencies. The genuine commitment of the people, communities, partners and the Council in Bridgend to come together in the most challenging of times to support our vulnerable people and the workforce dedicated to supporting them is heartening. This provides the basis for focused improvement and improving outcomes in the coming year.

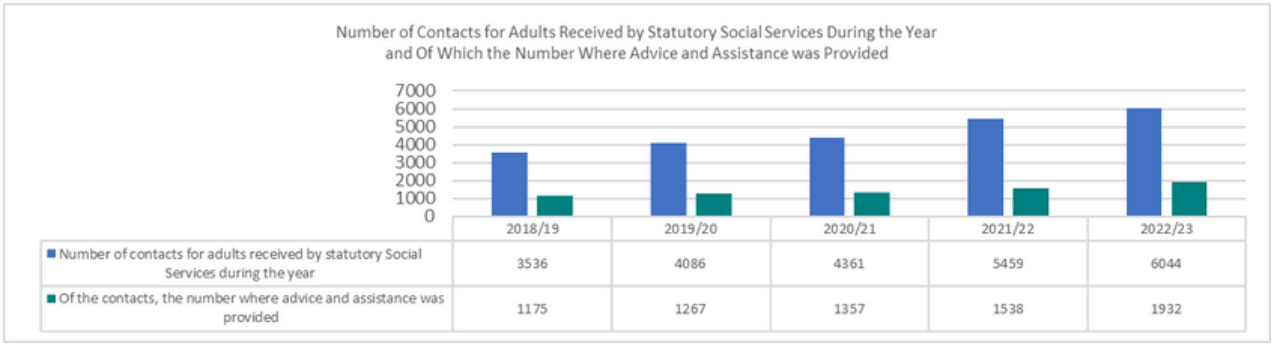
Claire Marchant
Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing
July 2023

Adult Social Care

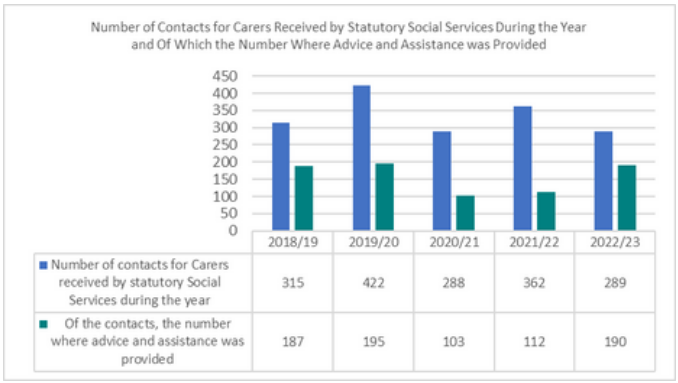


High Level Summary of Performance

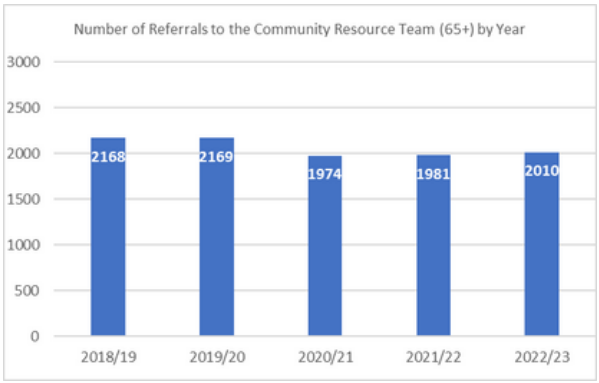
Contacts



	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year	3536	4086	4361	5459	6044
Of the contacts, the number where advice and assistance was provided	1175	1267	1357	1538	1932

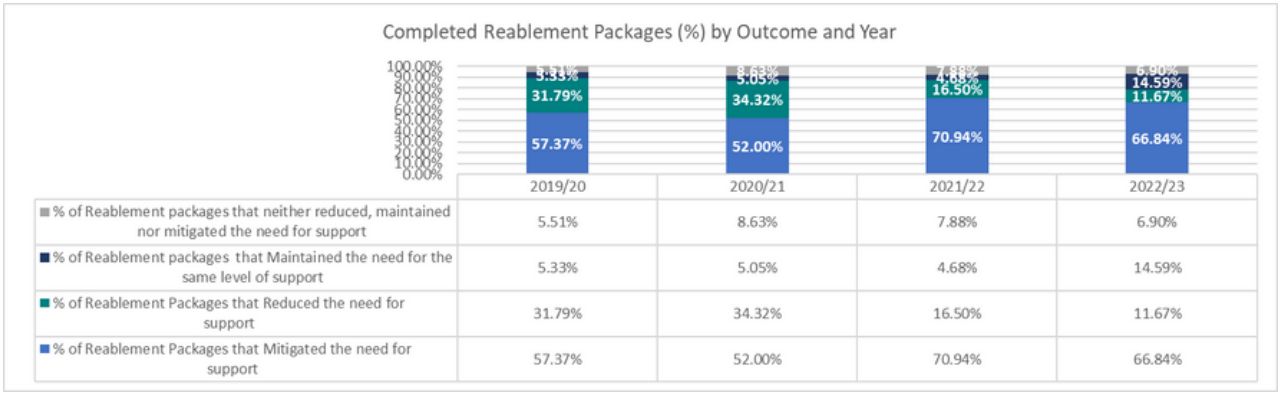


	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of contacts for Carers received by statutory Social Services during the year	315	422	288	362	289
Of the contacts, the number where advice and assistance was provided	187	195	103	112	190

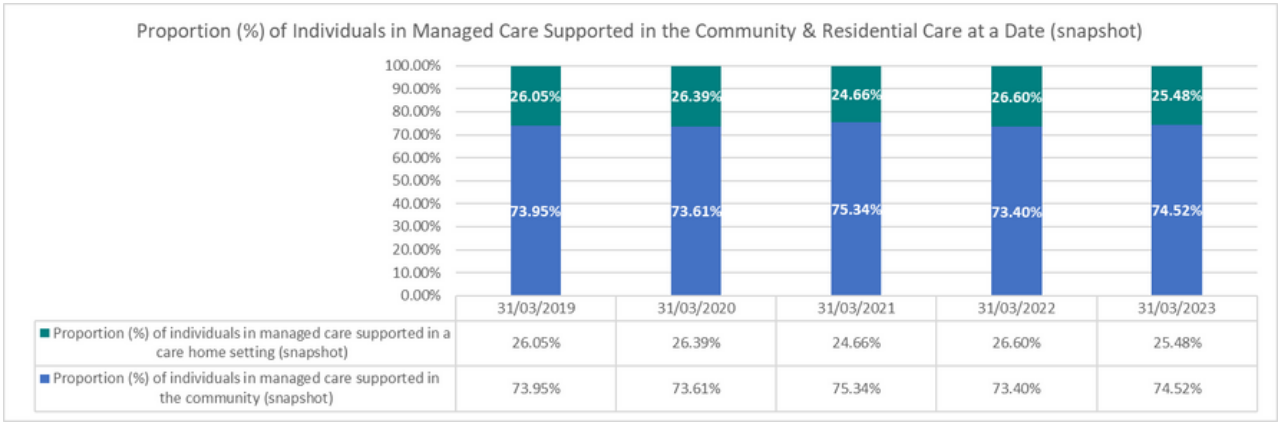


Adult Social Care

Reablement & Services

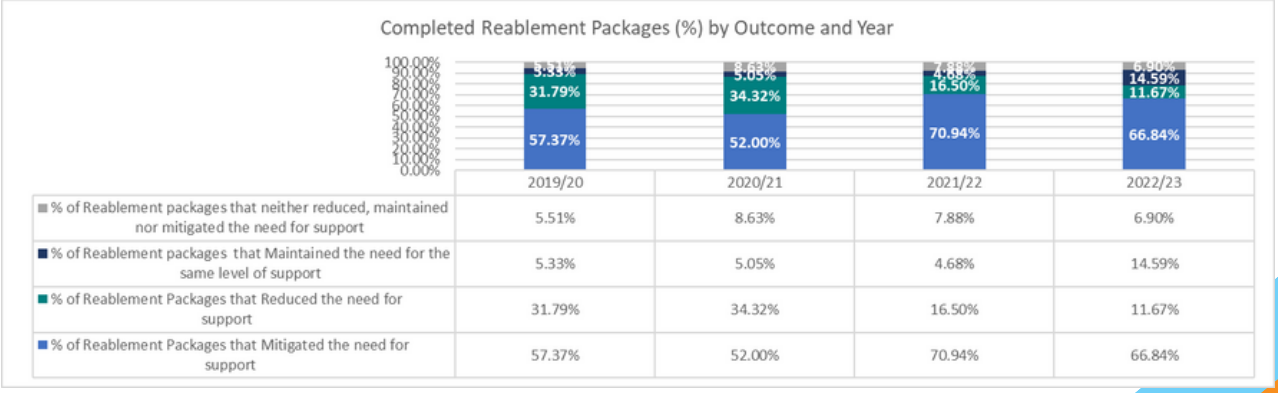


	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
% of Reablement packages that neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support	5.51%	8.63%	7.88%	6.90%
% of Reablement packages that Maintained the need for the same level of support	5.33%	5.05%	4.68%	14.59%
% of Reablement Packages that Reduced the need for support	31.79%	34.32%	16.50%	11.67%
% of Reablement Packages that Mitigated the need for support	57.37%	52.00%	70.94%	66.84%



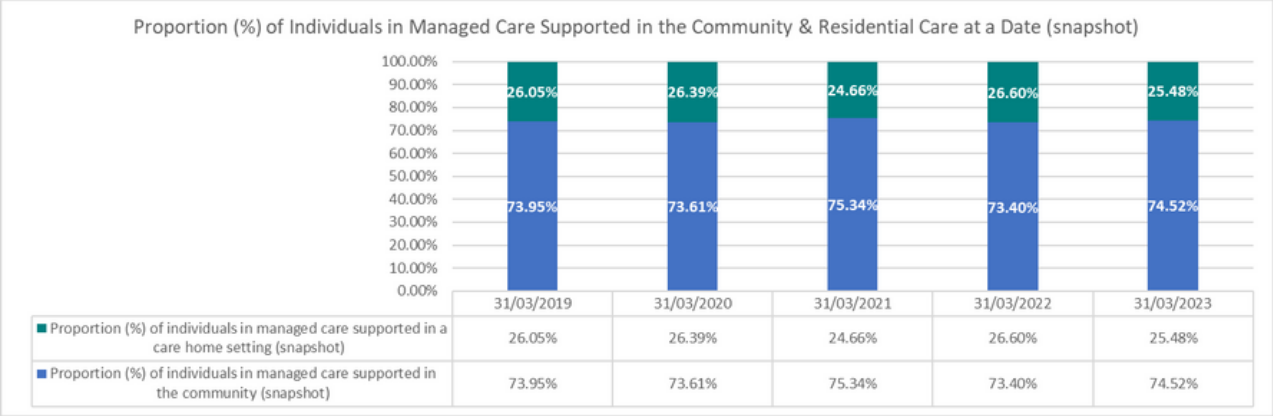
	31/03/2019	31/03/2020	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023
Proportion (%) of individuals in managed care supported in a care home setting (snapshot)	26.05%	26.39%	24.66%	26.60%	25.48%
Proportion (%) of individuals in managed care supported in the community (snapshot)	73.95%	73.61%	75.34%	73.40%	74.52%

Assessments, Support Plan & Reviews



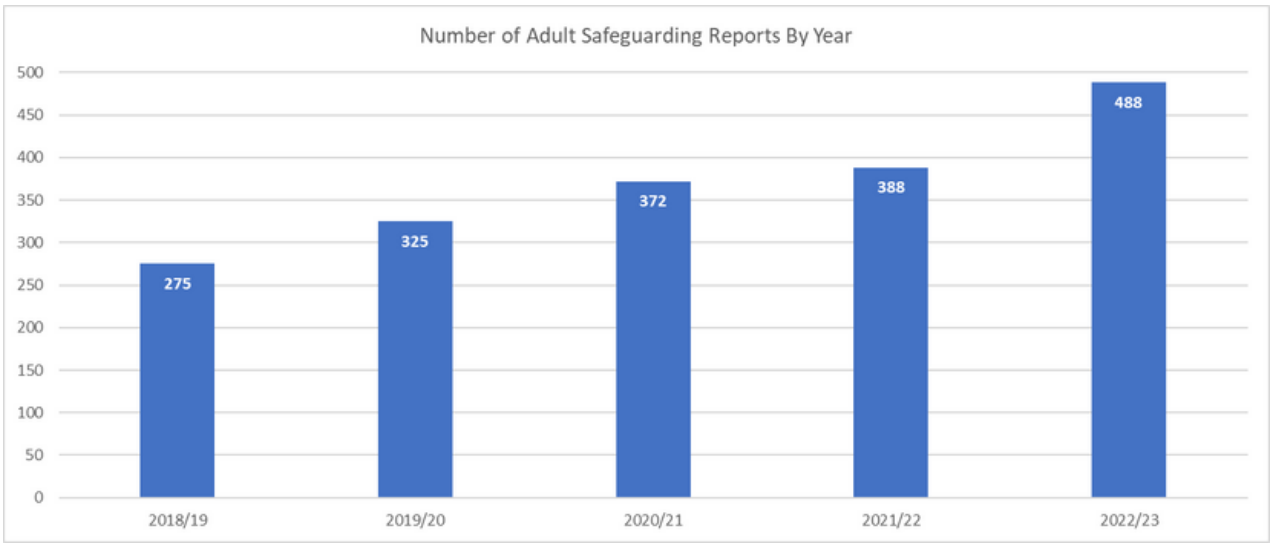
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
% of Reablement packages that neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support	5.51%	8.63%	7.88%	6.90%
% of Reablement packages that Maintained the need for the same level of support	5.33%	5.05%	4.68%	14.59%
% of Reablement Packages that Reduced the need for support	31.79%	34.32%	16.50%	11.67%
% of Reablement Packages that Mitigated the need for support	57.37%	52.00%	70.94%	66.84%

Adult Social Care

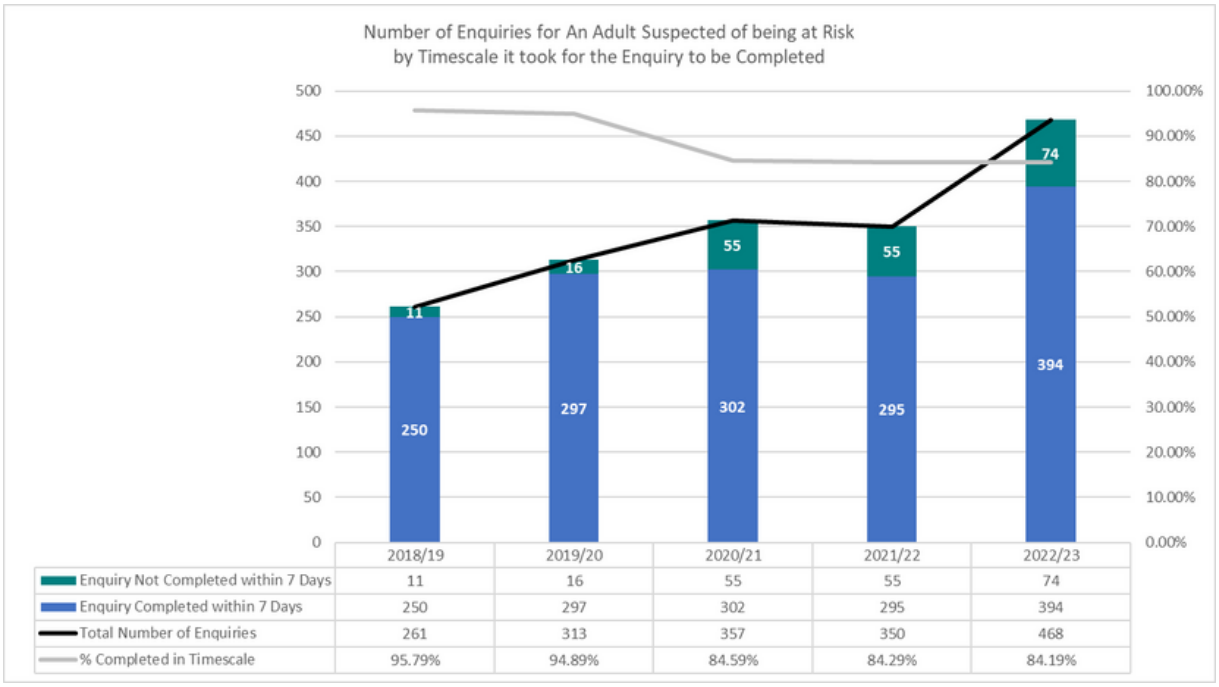


	31/03/2019	31/03/2020	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023
Proportion (%) of individuals in managed care supported in a care home setting (snapshot)	26.05%	26.39%	24.66%	26.60%	25.48%
Proportion (%) of individuals in managed care supported in the community (snapshot)	73.95%	73.61%	75.34%	73.40%	74.52%

Safeguarding



Adult Social Care



	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Enquiry Not Completed within 7 Days	11	16	55	55	74
Enquiry Completed within 7 Days	250	297	302	295	394
Total Number of Enquiries	261	313	357	350	468
% Completed in Timescale	95.79%	94.89%	84.59%	84.29%	84.19%

It has been a year of 'resetting' following the pandemic for adult social care. A summary of performance is highlighted below:

- There have been 7897 contacts in 2022/23 (23% increase from 2021/22) and 1815 assessments (9% decrease from 2021/22). Although the number of assessments completed decreased, we did see a 2% increase in the number of people with a care and support plan in place as of 31st March 2023 compared to the 31st March 2022. Contact, assessment and care and support plan data demonstrate our front door services are working well to ensure that people accessing the right person as the right time.

Adult Social Care

- 377 reablement packages were completed (7% decrease from 2021/22). When reablement is delivered it is very effective at maximising people's independence. The percentage of those reablement packages that increase the need for support decreased from 7.88% to 6.9%. reducing the need for ongoing care and support. Building reablement levels back to pre-pandemic levels to optimise its impact is a key priority for adult services.

- 213 Direct Payments for adults with care and support needs at 31st March 2023 which is a slight decrease from 2021/22; however there are more hours of direct payments being provided, reflecting the level of need.

- As of 31st March 2023, 25.48% of people who receive care and support were supported within a residential setting compared to 74.52% within the community. Whilst this is only a marginal increase in performance when compared to 31st March 2022 where we reported 26.6% and 73.4% respectively, it demonstrates our ongoing focus on supporting people to remain independent within their own home.

- 289 carers contacts to the Council (a decrease of 20% compared to 2021/22). The number of carers with a care and support plan as at 31st March 2023 did increase by 26% when compared to the 31st March 2022. This is still a low number when compared to other local authorities, and whilst this could be due to the success of preventative services, more work will be progressed in 2023/24 to understand and ensure support for carers is the best it can be in Bridgend.

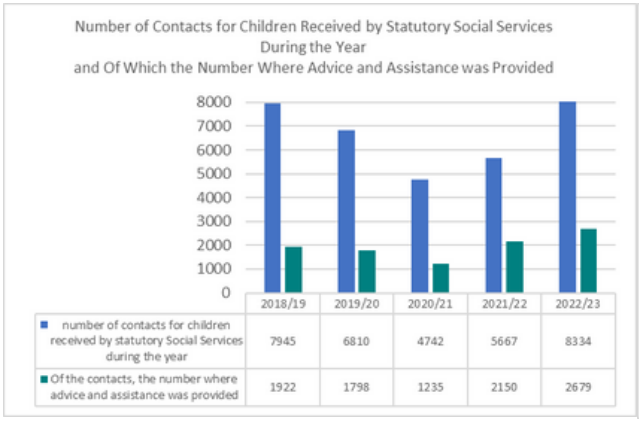
- The number of adults requiring an Independent Professional Advocate significantly increased from 90 in 2021/22 to 181 in 2022/23. We provided 96% (173) of those requiring an advocate with the service, as noted throughout this report continued promotion and support of the advocacy service is a priority for the coming year.

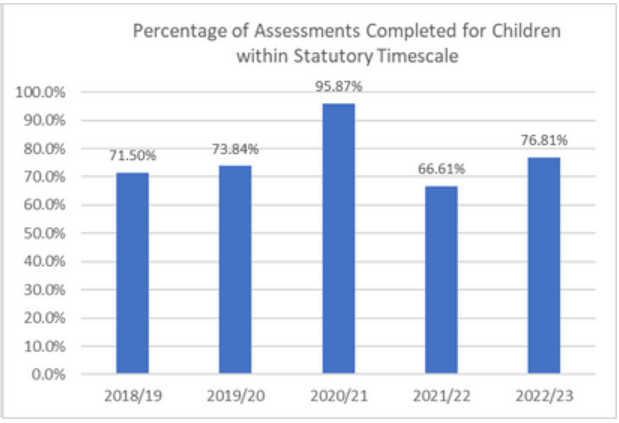
Children's Social Care

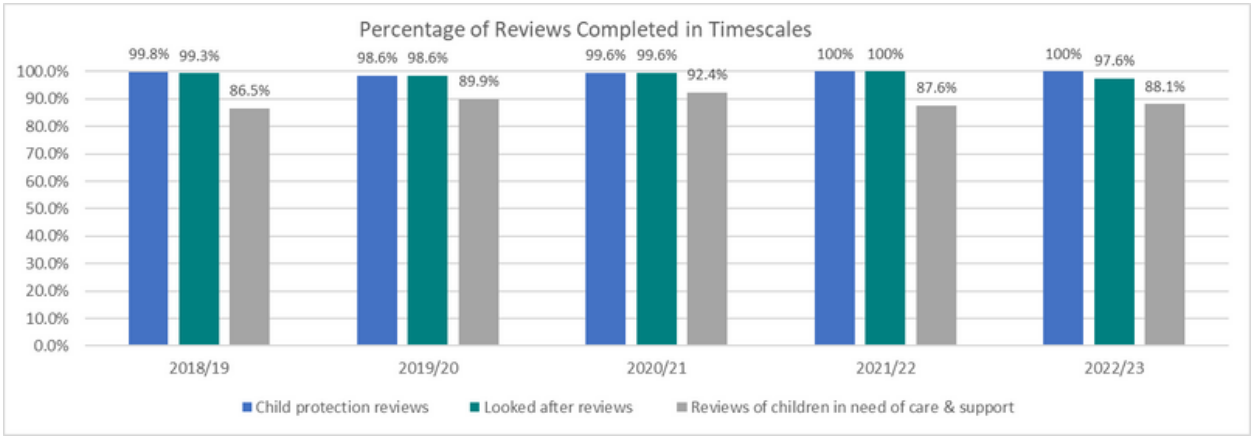


Children's Social Care

Contacts, Assessments & Reviews

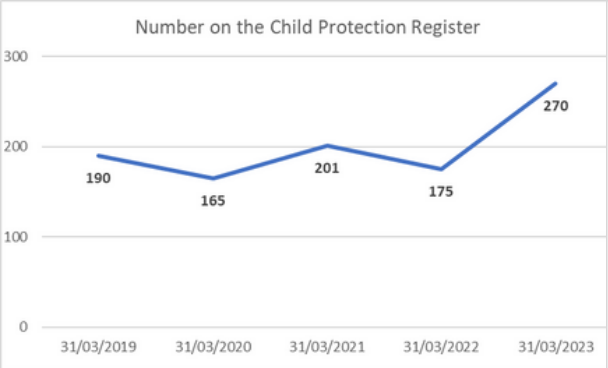


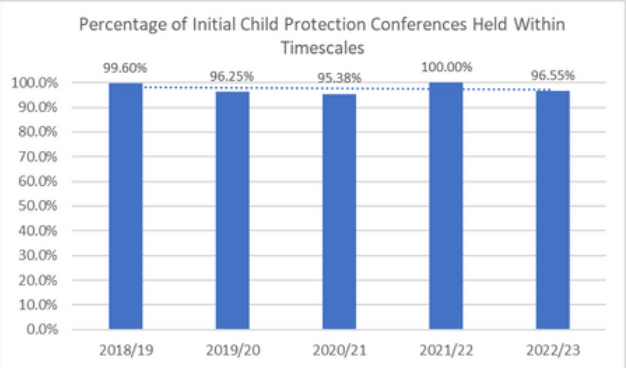


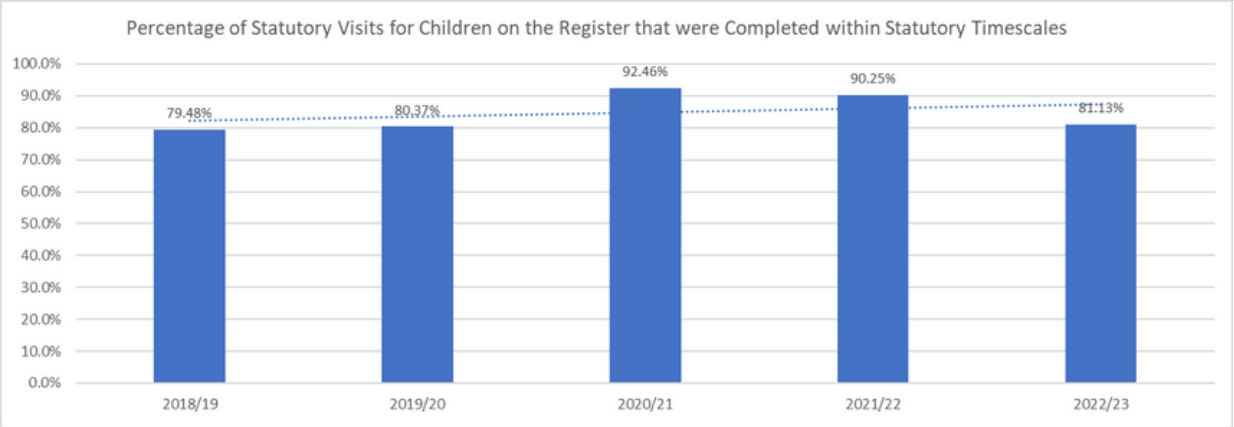


Children's Social Care

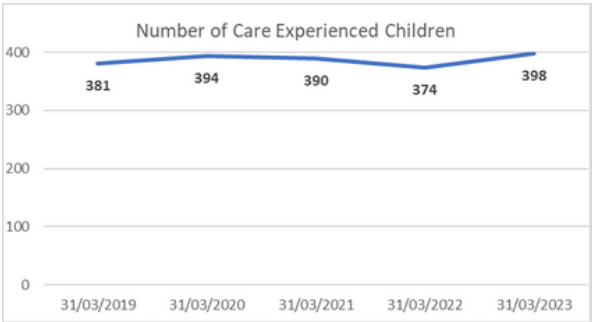
Child Protection

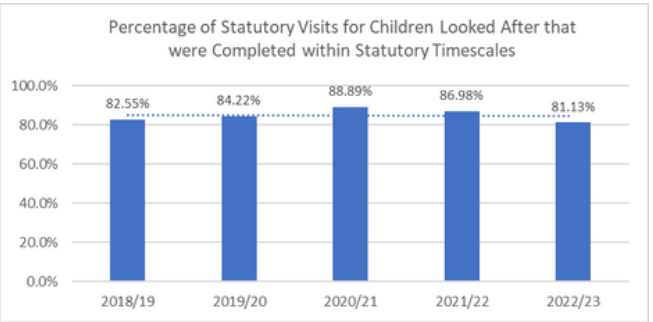




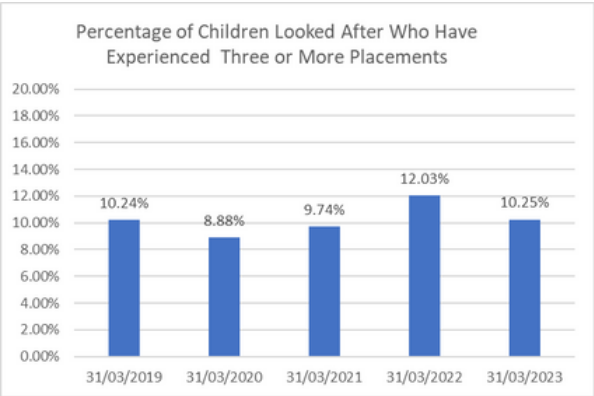


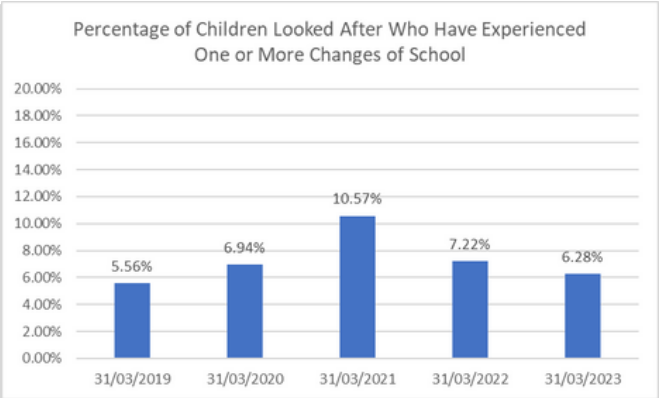
Care Experienced Children





Children's Social Care





2022/23 saw an exponential increase in contacts and safeguarding and child protection work in children's social care. Despite this, and the workforce challenges, quantitative performance.

- During the year contacts to children's social care grew exponentially by 47.1%. Increasing from 5667 to 2021-22 to 8334 in 2022/23. 99.5% screening decision made in 24 hours in 2022/23 which is excellent performance. The increase in contacts impacted on the number of children and families supported across children's social care:
    - 3114 assessments were completed in the year, which increased by 89.4% when compared to 2021/22.
    - There were 1202 children with care and support plans as at 31.03.23 (9.3% increase compared to 31.03.22).
    - There were 2154 initial strategy meetings in 2022/23 (98.3% increase compared to 2021/22)
    - There were 1557 completed S47 investigations in 2022/23 (80% increase compared to 2021/22).
    - There were 270 children on the child protection register as at 31.03.23 (54% increase compared to 31.03.23).

Children's Social Care

- The increased numbers of children and young people being referred to our services has proportionately increased the number of child protection registrations and the number of care experienced children. As of 31st March 2023, the number of children on the children protection register had increased by 54% to 270 and the number of care experienced children increased by 6.4% to 398. These numbers are comparatively very high when compared to the rest of Wales. CTM as a region has high levels of statutory interventions in the lives of children and families. Priorities for 2023/24 are to work with partners to consider whether preventative services can support more families outside of statutory children's services ·and to develop a common understanding of the threshold of need for statutory intervention.

- Whilst the number of child protection registrations has increased, 100% of child protection review conferences convened during 2022/23 were held within timescales. However, increased demand has impacted the compliance of reviews for care experienced children which has decreased from 100% in 2021/22 to 97.63%. To support this demand the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service has increased capacity in the team with the addition of 2.5 agency staff members, although the IRO caseloads remain higher than best practice levels.

- Performance around the stability of care experienced children remains positive with the percentage of care experienced experiencing three or more placements during the year decreasing from 12.03% as of 31st March 2022 to 10.2% as of 31st March 2023.

- Whilst, the percentage of care leavers who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 13-24 months since leaving care has increased from 54.55% in 2021-22 to 62.07% in 2022-23, the number engaging in the 12 months since leaving care has decreased from 64.05% to 54.17%. It is important to note that the numbers of young people engaged in the 24 months since leaving care remains higher than those in the 12-month cohort. The team continue to encourage and support young people to engage in, and continue with their education, employment, and training. Support is offered with course fees, enrolment fees, specialist equipment, uniforms, and interview clothes to assist young people.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

Regulated Services

Within Adult Social Care, inspections were undertaken across 5 regulated residential establishments. The inspections considered the wellbeing of individuals receiving care and support, the quality of care and support provided and the leadership and management of the service.

Overall, a good standard of care was reported across the service with the following areas noted as key strengths:

- relationships between staff and individuals receiving care and support;
- choice of food and positive mealtime experiences;
- provision of activities;
- and individuals are happy with their care and support and their needs are well met.

Whilst key strengths were identified, the process also highlighted areas for improvement in a small number of the establishments, which included strengthening training and supervision arrangements. The key theme emerging across the service related to ensuring we have up to date policies and procedures in place.

The Directorate appointed a Policy Officer and since commencing their post the Policy Officer has prioritised and reviewed the relevant policies relating to the service. All areas for improvement and priority actions have been addressed.

Within Children's Social Care, 4 regulatory inspections were completed across our regulatory residential services and focused on the 4 core themes of Well-being; Care and Support; Environment; and Leadership and Management.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

The first residential inspection completed during the year identified 13 priority action notices. Prior to this inspection, the Council had already undertaken its own independent investigation which resulted in the establishment being placed into the Escalating Concerns process and a “corrective action plan” being implemented. The service was placed into dormancy and an independent review commissioned and action on.

A key reflection from the escalating concerns process noted that the Council required a dedicated Responsible Individual for Children’s Social Care Homes and in November 2022 the new officer commenced their post.

The second residential inspection to be undertaken identified the following areas of strength:

- young people are supported to pursue activities that interest and maintain, where appropriate, relationships with friends and family;
- young people are supported to engage in education;
- and leadership and management are fully operational.

3 areas for improvement were identified which focussed on building on key processes already in place to ensure consistency in the supervision and training of staff, ensure a full complement of permanent staff and further develop systems to monitor and review quality of care and support. An action plan was developed to ensure the areas of improvement were addressed and all have now been completed.

The final 2 residential inspections identified no priority action notices and no areas for improvement. Key strengths included:

- staff receive the required support and training to undertake their role;
- leadership and management is effective;
- and systems are in place to monitor care and support.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

Local Authority Inspections

CIW carried out a performance evaluation inspection of Children's Social Care in May 2022. Whilst some strengths were identified a significant number of areas requiring improvement at pace were highlighted. A summary of the main findings of the inspection were:

- Like many local authorities across Wales, BCBC has experienced challenges in relation to the provision and delivery of social care. Many of the pressures experienced by the local authority's children's services reflect the national pandemic recovery context including high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs. Critical workforce deficits in relation to social work recruitment, retention, and staff absence, had resulted in the loss of experienced staff and a competitive market for and an over reliance on newly qualified and agency social workers.

- CIW's assurance check undertaken in April 2021 highlighted some of these pressures and potential service risks, and those findings informed this inspection. The culmination of these pressures coupled with deficits in some systems and processes, including managerial oversight arrangements, has had a significant adverse impact on the delivery of some children's services in Bridgend County Borough. Concerns were identified in relation to the timeliness of the local authority's Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) service and the ability to meet its statutory responsibilities to promote and protect the well-being of vulnerable children and families.

- This inspection was undertaken at a time when senior leaders, managers and politicians had recognised the significant action and resource needed to improve the consistency and quality of children's services and had instigated an internal critical response plan, aligned to the local authority's directorate and corporate risk registers, to oversee the immediate remedial changes needed in relation to the identified deficits in their IAA service.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

The local authority's response has included the commissioning of a programme of independent quality assurance to provide an assessment of the strengths and areas for development in children's services and to inform practice development, the deployment of a managed care team and re-deployment of staff from across the service/council to provide additional support to those teams experiencing the most pressure. Management oversight and decision-making has been strengthened by increased frequency of supervision in priority areas and better collection and scrutiny of performance information data. Planning to reconfigure and improve the resilience and sustainability of the service in the longer term is also actively being taken forward.

- In March 2022, the local authority established a Children's Social Care Improving Outcomes Strategic Board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council and is supported by an independent advisor. The board provides regular oversight, challenge, and direction to enable the delivery of the local authority's strategic plan and areas for development.

- The local authority has taken action to instigate immediate learning following recent critical incidents. These incidents have been escalated to Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTM RSB) who is responsible for overseeing multi-agency Child Practice Reviews (CPRs). CTM RSB implemented an executive steering group to steer a rapid review of safeguarding in Bridgend County Borough. The steering group's purpose has been extended to include an assurance role across the region.

This inspection found there was too much variation in the quality of services and social work practice provided to children and families. CIW required that the local authority will need to assure itself of the pace, quality, delivery, and impact of its improvement activity.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

An action plan was developed in response to the recommendations made by CIW which was overseen by an independently advised Improvement Board, chaired by the Chief Executive which had been established in March 2022 prior to the inspection, in recognition by the Council of the need to strengthen leadership oversight and direction of the improvements required. Whilst the findings of the CIW inspection were very difficult, they did reflect the self evaluation of the Council and some improvements had started at the time of the inspection which was recognised by CIW in their judgement. This inspection, alongside the critical regulatory inspection, resulted in CIW expressing their 'serious concerns' with Bridgend children's services and a requirement for 'sustainable improvement at pace'.

In November 2022, the CIW completed an improvement check of children's social care which focussed on progress made in areas identified for improvement during the Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) of May 2022. The summary of the improvement check noted the following :

- The workforce position remains fragile. The local authority is aware of the fundamental importance of having a stable and sufficient workforce to ensure there is sufficient capacity and capability to drive forward and sustain improvements.
- The local authority is experiencing rising numbers of children who are subject to child protection registration, care experienced children,1 and children receiving care and support. There continues to be an increase in the numbers of contacts/referrals received and a high level of demand for services coupled with increased complexity in the needs of children and families, which BCBC is responding to within the context of increasing financial pressures. eaders have a good line of sight on the current situation in children's services. The Chief Executive of BCBC continues to chair the Improving Outcomes for Children Board, which was set up in March 2022. The Board has made a positive impact through improved oversight of children's services and early help services, ensuring there is sufficient information about, and scrutiny of, performance.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

- Leaders and senior managers are committed to making improvements to support children's well-being. There continues to be a strong focus and a considerable amount of work underway to secure and monitor improvements in children's services. Improved systems have been implemented to monitor compliance and areas of risk and potential risk. The local authority has commissioned external expertise to support with identifying how well services are working, and how services can be improved or refined to maximise their impact and outcomes for children and families. The local authority continues to commission a programme of independent quality assurance to provide ongoing assessment of the strengths and areas for development in children's services and to inform practice development.

- On 24 November 2022, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board published the Child Practice Review in relation to the tragic death of Logan Mwangi. The Board and the agencies involved with Logan and his family during his short life, have accepted in full the findings of the Child Practice Review. The Safeguarding Board and the local authority have stated they will implement the review recommendations. We will monitor the local authority's progress regarding implementation of recommendations through our ongoing performance review activity.

- The local authority has strengthened managerial oversight and quality assurance, resulting in some positive developments in practice. Significant improvement plans have been formulated and new posts in children's services have been introduced to assist in driving plans forward. Implementation and embedding of improvement plans continue to be work in progress. However, the fragility of the workforce position remains a significant risk to the local authority achieving and sustaining improvements. The local authority must continue to assure itself of the priority status, pace, quality, delivery, and impact of its improvement activity.

How well our regulator has said we have performed

The response to the outcome of the improvement check and to ensure continued improvement, the Council reviewed and updated its action plan and recommendations and continues to report on progress to the Improving Outcomes for Children Board, Member Advisory Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The rapid improvements evidenced between May and November 2022 were sufficient that CIW confirmed that they no longer had serious concerns with regards the Council's children's social care but that they considered that Bridgend children's services required improvement. A sustainable improvement plan, to ensure the rapid improvements are maintained and variations in quality addressed was required. CIW recognised that the Council had made significant short term investment to stabilise the fragility but was highly dependent on agency workforce to meet the levels of statutory work in a timely and effective way.

Work to refresh the Children's Social Care 3-year strategic plan with a focus on developing a sustainability plan which will set out a service, workforce and financial strategy on how the Council works with children and families at risk in Bridgend. The draft plan, informed by analytical work progressed by the Institute of Public Care and the Council, has been completed. This will be considered by Cabinet as a priority in Autumn 2023.

As indicated in the November 2022 improvement check, CIW continue to closely monitor our performance and progress. In June 2023, a Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) led by CIW in partnership with Estyn, Heath Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) was undertaken. It is anticipated that the findings of this report will be published in early autumn 2023.

The Most Significant Risks We Face Going Forward

An open transparent culture and practice is fundamental in supporting continual improvement by enabling us to identify, manage and mitigate the challenges and risks we face. The Council continues to manage a number of inter-related risks and challenges.

- Risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk require an effective, highly skilled response from multi-agency safeguarding partnerships with leadership from local authorities. There is a risk that, without adequate budgets and a sufficient experienced well supported workforce, the Council, and partner's safeguarding arrangements will not be effective, and that children and adults at risk will not be kept safe. Whilst the Council Social Services department is the lead agency for safeguarding, all partners need to respond together to the increase in need and complexity in Bridgend.

- Fragility of the workforce (permanent and agency).Whilst improvements have been achieved, due to operating above establishment and significantly over budget in children's social care. A short, medium and long term workforce plan is needed to achieve a permanent well-supported, resourced workforce establishment. In adult social care, whilst there have been improvements, retention and recruitment of the care workforce remains a challenge against the backdrop of an ageing workforce profile.

- To support children and families including preventative services which can support more families with multiple needs outside of statutory services.

- Signs of Safety implementation is at a relatively early stage – and alongside the Strength Based, Outcome Focussed model of practice in adult social care needs long term systematic support to embed and impact.

- Service sufficiency to meet assessed need in a timely way is challenged in critical areas – most notably registered quality residential care and fostering for children and care and support at home and specialist residential provision for adults.

The Most Significant Risks We Face Going Forward

- The reduced levels of reablement compared to pre-pandemic mean some people are not benefiting from the opportunity reablement gives to retain or regain independent living skills. The re-setting of reablement – need to increase reablement capacity to pre-pandemic levels to mitigate the need for long term care – is a key priority in adult social care.

- There are significant service and financial pressures in learning disabilities with a need for a major review of learning disability services will inform the transformation of practice and commissioning.

- Waiting lists for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) authorisations and renewals and a move from UK government to delay (indefinitely) the implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards requires the Council to review the way it manages DoLs to safeguard vulnerable individuals.

- Pressure across the health and social care system continues and is the focus of Welsh Government as the system in Bridgend operates at 95% capacity at all times. Welsh Government require 'further faster' changes to the health and care system to mitigate future winter crises.

- Significant pressures in in respect of the budget to meet the need for social care services in Bridgend. Some specific grants which underpinned a balanced budget in previous years have ended. This combined with the increase in demand means there are significant overspends linked to the service and workforce required to meet our statutory requirements and the Council faces growing challenges in meeting the statutory social services requirements and setting and delivering a balanced budget.

- Wellbeing challenges faced by people following the pandemic.

Looking to the Future
Key Priorities for 2023/24

Section 3 of this report outlines key priorities for 2023/24 against each of the 6 quality standards.

However, looking holistically across our services the key priorities for Social Services and Wellbeing in Bridgend in 2023/24 are:

The 7 themes across the directorate which we will be strategically progressing over the next 3 years are:

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

The key priorities for Social Services and Wellbeing in Bridgend in 2023/24 are:

Children's Social Care

Within Children's Social Care a sustainability plan is to be considered by Autumn Cabinet. The key priorities within the plan for 2023/24 are:

- Implement new residential provision and operating model which meets the needs of children and young people who will be accommodated there;
- Enhance in house foster care capacity and implement therapeutic support service for foster carers;
- Reduce variability in the quality of practice through implementing Signs of Safety model of practice, supported by a quality assurance framework;
- Embed learning from child practice reviews,
- Progress the children's social worker workforce plan including International social work recruitment; 'Grow our own' initiatives; focus on workforce wellbeing; and enhanced recruitment campaigns and marketing

Looking to the Future
Key Priorities for 2023/24

- Fit for purpose operating models/ structures across children's social care ensuring resourced establishments with good practice level caseloads across teams;
- Finalise and implement the commissioning strategy including how we support children and families with disabilities and targeted prevention at the edge of statutory intervention

Delivery of the actions in the plan will enable us to address the following key challenges:

- Reducing the number and proportion of children and young people who need to experience care and safeguarding in Bridgend.
- Helping more families in Bridgend stay together and bring their children up to be resilient and successful adults.
- Working with our partners to make sure families get the right help at the right time.
- Re-focusing our resources on more cost-effective support for families with complex needs rather than expensive substitute care experiences

Adult Social Care

The key priorities within adult social care for 2023/24 are:

- Resetting reablement.
- Transformation of Learning Disabilities.
- Working with regional partners to remodel community services (and grant funding) in accordance with the Welsh Government 'Further Faster' policy.
- Implement an improvement plan to address waiting lists for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard assessments and renewals.
- Implement a new operating model following a social work review.
- Continue to modernise the organisation of care and support at home including elimination of split shifts and use of electric vehicles.
- Increase the number of assessments offered to unpaid carers.

Prevention & Wellbeing

The key priorities within our prevention and wellbeing service for 2023/24are:

- Implement a leisure strategy and option appraisal of contract.
- Roll out local community co-ordination across the County Borough.
- Work with partners to continue to focus on the most vulnerable.
- Work corporately to understand options to address energy financial risks.

2. How are People Shaping our Services

We are committed to practice, service development and delivery being driven by people whose lives they impact on

The rights of children and adults should be evident in all we do

During the year, we revised our quality assurance framework to ensure the voice of people as a core standard in all quality assurance activity.

Here is a snapshot of engagement activities undertaken across the Directorate:

Adult Social Care

- Within Domiciliary Care Services, community meetings are facilitated by management teams and are accessible to all individuals; subject areas include health and wellbeing, community and 'at home' activities.

- In Learning Disability services, a number of individuals are active participants and members of People's First Bridgend, an independent advocacy group for people with learning disabilities and autism. Participants attend regular meetings and actively contribute on the development of services.

- Within older persons residential services and learning disability accommodation services feedback is captured in quarterly care reviews by the Provider Service Manager and RI visits

- The regionally supported substance misuse group continues to meet on a monthly basis and has strong involvement from people with lived experience.

2. How are People Shaping our Services

Case Study: 'Self-advocates providing training to Public Services'

People First Bridgend (PFB) is a local charity that advocates for the rights of adults with learning disabilities and autism. It has been funded by the local authority for 30 years and is one of the original People First advocacy groups in Wales. It has two contracts with BCBC: Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy, and Non-statutory Advocacy.

Non-statutory advocacy includes running self-advocacy groups and disability awareness training. PFB's self-advocacy group is called the Advisory Team, with a membership of 10-18 adults with learning disabilities and lower-functioning autism from around Bridgend County. These are PFB's self-advocates. The Advisory Team's purpose is to build the skills and confidence needed to speak up for themselves and to help represent the voice of Bridgend's learning disability community in local, regional, and national developments. The Advisory Team also steers the direction of PFB, ensuring it is true to its purpose and is member-led.

In January 2023, South Wales Police invited PFB to their headquarters as part of its 'Diversity Matters, Inclusion Wins' programme, which teaches staff and officers about the minority and disadvantaged peoples they may encounter during their duties. Seven members of PFB's Advisory Team delivered two training sessions to 100 trainee police. It covered what learning disability is, the different ways it affects people's communication and understanding, and how the police can better accommodate people's learning disabilities during encounters.

For the group work, trainee officers were split up and assigned a PFB Advisor. Each group was tasked with using their new knowledge to find out one thing about that person. For many trainees, this was the first time they had been given formal training on learning disability; for some, it was the first time they ever met someone with a learning disability.

2. How are People Shaping our Services

The purpose of the training was to break down negative stereotypes and assumptions trainees may have towards people with learning disabilities. The format encouraged experimentation and reflection. It allowed trainees to feel comfortable to make mistakes and learn from them in a safe and supportive activity. Trainees found the session powerful, especially the group work, commenting that there is no substitute for meeting real people with lived experiences. The benefits were mutual, as PFB Advisors were able to practice their self-advocacy skills, building their confidence to speak on equal terms with people in positions of power and authority.

This was a powerful example of how experienced self-advocates can use their skills to train public services and benefit the wider learning disability community. The confidence, understanding, and techniques that trainee officers gained will ensure other people with learning disabilities have better interactions with the police in the future. Of all the activities PFB does, the self-advocates are most proud of training public services. People cannot change their inherent characteristics, such as learning disabilities, but other members of society can adapt their behaviour and attitudes to be more inclusive of them. This is the fundamental lesson that self-advocates aim to teach through this training.

Children's Social Care

- The Bridgend Youth Voice Forum is independently facilitated by NYAS for Bridgend care experienced children.
- Consultation with Child / Young Person questionnaires to inform the Foster Carer Review.
- Consultations on behalf of the Brynmenyn Hub Project Board to name the new Residential Children's Home. After a series of interactive exercises, the young people chose for the home to be called 'Meadows View / Golygfa'r Ddôl'.
- Two of our young people represent Bridgend Care Experienced Children's Forum as Ambassadors for Voices from Care Cymru. They have been involved in a summit meeting with other care experienced young people and Ministers to discuss the radical reform of the care system in Wales.

2. How are People Shaping our Services

Case Study: Corporate Parenting Strategy

We have recently launched a new Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Deputy Leader, worked with care experienced children, young people, care leavers and Bridgend Youth Voice Forum to co-produce the document. Professionals from different council departments, partner agencies and elected member also worked together to develop the strategy.

The strategy focuses on addressing the needs, views and wants of our care experienced children and young people to enable them to live happy and fulfilling lives. It includes a list of promises made by over forty professionals, carers and councillors representing multiple support services, stating their own personal commitment to children and young people.

The strategy has been welcomed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes and Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS, both of whom visited Bridgend to support the official launch of the Strategy. The launch event itself was facilitated by eight representatives of Bridgend Youth Voice Forum with professionals and politicians forming the audience.



People that Use Our Services



To ensure that we understand the needs of the people who access our services and work towards continual improvement, it is important that we understand their views and experiences.

Focus Groups

The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing held 2 focus groups to gain an insight into how people felt about the services they received over the last year.

The ***Care Experienced Children Focus Group*** highlighted that:

- the majority of young people know who contact about their advice and support;
- all felt that they have been treated with dignity and respect;
- all felt that they had been provided with the right information and advice when they needed it;
- the majority of young people were happy with the services they received;
- and all felt that they had been actively involved in decisions about how their care and support was provided.

Areas identified for improvement were to:

- ensure young people know who to contact in the absence of their worker;
- provide children and young people with a “social worker” profile including their contact number; ahead of them first meeting their worker;
- improve wellbeing support by ensuring young people understand where to go for information and advice; particularly at times of crisis;
- increase promotion of support and services available to young people via voluntary organisations.
- and to continue to increase the active offer of advocacy.

People that Use Our Services

The ***People First Focus Group*** highlighted that:

- the majority of people and their families had been provided with the right information and advice when needed but did not always know who to contact with regard to their care and support;
- whilst all were able to communicate in their preferred language there have been occasions where family members have had to request an easy-read version of documentation;
- the majority of people were satisfied with the services they received;
- whilst the majority of people noted they accessed voluntary organisations and community groups; it was noted that voluntary organisations are struggling to recruit volunteers.
- and it was also noted that people are struggling to access some community based services as, following the COVID-19 pandemic there is a decrease in the number of places accepting cash.

Areas identified for improvement were to:

- provide people with a “social worker” profile including their contact number;
- improve communication by producing easy-read documentation as standard for those people that require them.
- increase activity to promote recruitment of staff across all providers including voluntary and community groups.
- work with key partners in the third sector to raise awareness of issues being faced in people noting being able to pay for services via cash and explore alternative solutions.

On-line Surveys

To further inform this report and understand how we can improve our services we hosted 4 online questionnaires for people who have had experiences of our services over the last 12 month. A total of 73 responses were received across the 4 questionnaires:

- Adult Social Care 17
- Children & Young People 12
- Unpaid Carers 13
- Parents 31

People that Use Our Services

Each questionnaire contained questions that were common across all 4 or had questions that were specific to that service area.

An analysis of responses noted that we are performing well in the following areas:

- 58% of respondents noted that they knew who to contact about their social care.
- 97% of respondents were able to communicate in their language of choice.
- 83% of adults in receipt of social care and unpaid carers have been treated with dignity and respect.

Key areas for improvement noted via the online surveys were to:

- Further develop communication to ensure people accessing all areas of our service:
    - know who to contact about their care and support;
    - and are provided with the right information at the right time.
- Ensure everyone is involved in the decisions about how social care services are provided to them.
- Increase the number of assessments offered to unpaid carers.
- Raise the profile of community and voluntary based services to all people who access all areas of our services.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the response to the on-line surveys represents a small proportion of people, their families and carers that access our services the areas for improvement identified are consistent with those identified within the focus groups and priorities for improvement identified for service areas.

People that Use Our Services

Staff

During the year, the Council held a survey for all staff members. The response rate for the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate reflected 33% of our staff as of 30th December 2022.

Overall, an analysis of the responses of staff from the Directorate were on the whole positive. Key highlights included:

- 88% of staff either strongly agreed or agreed that their team provides a good and efficient service with 86% noting they felt their role made a difference.
- 88% of staff either strongly agreed or agreed they enjoy their role with 67% noting they feel valued at work.
- Whilst 67% either strongly agreed or agreed with being satisfied with the Council as an employer, 82% reported that working at the Council makes them want to perform to the best of their ability.
- 94% of staff reported having team meetings with 90% reporting they have one to one meetings with their manager.
- Overall, 82% of staff reported either strongly agreed or agreed that they receive the support they need from their line manager to do their job well; with 88% reporting that they have discussed their learning and development needs within the last month.

Since the survey was completed, the Council has set a new 5-year Corporate Plan with each Directorate currently reviewing their Business Plans to ensure that the Council's objectives are linked to their own priorities. Within Social Services and Wellbeing we have worked with the Divisional Management Teams to ensure that not only do service area priorities focus on key improvements but are aligned to the Corporate Objectives.

People that Use Our Services

The Council has also reviewed its staff Health and Wellbeing pages on the Council's intranet pages. Literature and posters on how staff can access wellbeing services and support can be found at locations across the Council. Within the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate a number of teams have undertaken group wellbeing sessions and the Health and Wellbeing Officer attended an Extended Managers Team meeting to promote the service. The Institute of Public Care is providing coaching to managers, and supporting teams to develop their team plans, linked to the Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plan. The health and wellbeing of our staff will continue to be a priority for 2023/24.

Complaints and Compliments

During the year, the Directorate received 195 complaints and 259 compliments. Complaints and compliments continue to be an important aspect of how we use information from people to shape our services.

An analysis of complaints received during the year highlighted 3 key themes: lack of support, staff conduct and communication.

Information from complaints and compliments will be further analysed during 2023/24 to highlight areas of good practice as well as those for training or development.

It is pleasing that the number of compliments is higher than the number of complaints and it is important that we learn from what is working well, as well as areas for improvement. Here are a few of the compliments received during the year include:

"'A' and I would like to thank you all for everything you did for mum. Your kindness, compassion, care and laughter are so much appreciated. Mum loved seeing you all. She loved your chats and being able to tell you her stories. As you know it meant so much for mum that she could remain in the comfort of her own home – and you all made that possible. Thank you for working alongside 'A' and I and for your support to us. We miss you all. If ever you have a free moment to call in for a coffee and chat we would love to see you. We will be forever grateful to you."

Support at Home Service

People that Use Our Services

"'B' has agreed that the support can be 2 hours a week without any hesitation! Shows how far he has come in a year, lot more confident. Please thank the team for all the great work they do to transforming people's lives. He's doing fab!"

Supported Living Service

"I just wanted to record how complimentary 'C' was in terms of the support you are currently providing for her Mum and indeed how grateful 'C' is for this support which was reflected in her supervision. Please can I also take the opportunity to thank you for your input, as undoubtedly the support you have provided has allowed 'C' to remain at work in the long term."

Integrated Community Networks Team

"Without the help of your service, we would not be getting the support we are receiving, the carers are fabulous, very person-centred, they treat 'D' with the upmost respect and compassion.!"

CAP & Integrated Short Term Social Work Services

"I would like to raise a compliment for a staff member, 'V' in the Older persons Mental health team. My Mum, [name] was diagnosed with young onset Alzheimer's at the age of YY, 'V' became involved in 2017. My Mum had an excellent relationship with her from the beginning. 'V' always showed kindness to my Mum, myself and my sister and brothers.''V' was so caring and compassionate and worked so tirelessly in an unusual situation as Mum was so young. 'V' was very aware of Mum's age and how some services were just centred at "older" people and advocated for her on her behalf. ''V' always had Mum's independence at the forefront of everything. 'V' also helped when there were more delicate conversations that I know Mum would not want to have with us and R stepped in and helped the situation. 'V' arranged care and support that helped Mum remain in her home for as long as she did. 'V' supported us greatly when it was time to move Mum into a care home, it was a very planned calm move which was the best for my Mum. 'U's kind and compassionate manner was such a support to us in what has been a difficult journey.
Many thanks"

Older People's Mental Health Team

People that Use Our Services

Children's Social Care

"Following the RCPC for 'E' last week, I just wanted to write to tell you how impressed I was during the meeting to hear about the exceptional work completed with the family by 'W'.

I felt that the family had been treated with sensitivity and understanding and parents have been provided with the knowledge and skills they need to feel confident and positive about their future.

During the conference, parents advised that 'W'. has been 'amazing' and were full of gratitude for the care and support that they have been given. "
SW commended on their ability to engage meaningfully and positively with parents to bring about change

"Please can I share the fantastic news that 'X'. has created a virtual life story book; an amazing piece of work which included videos and animation chosen by the child. Well done, 'X'!"
Social Work Assistant - innovative and creative engagement with a child to help them understand their life story.

"'F' said you have been brilliant, have a wealth of knowledge and experience and they have found all your strategies and tips very helpful."
Kinship & Permanence Team

"'Z' has been nothing less than amazing (she has been a shoulder to lean on, someone who helped us through sad and difficult times, someone who has helped us make sense of the situation , someone who gives us a voice and more importantly someone who gives us optimism 24/7"
Placements & Fostering Team

"I met [name] today and he was very complementary about you both. He wanted me to know that he has a great social worker and the difference the work you have done with him around using public transport has made to his life.

We are obviously very lucky to have you both as assets in the service and I was chuffed to receive this feedback. Thank you both!"
Child Disability and Transition Team

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care



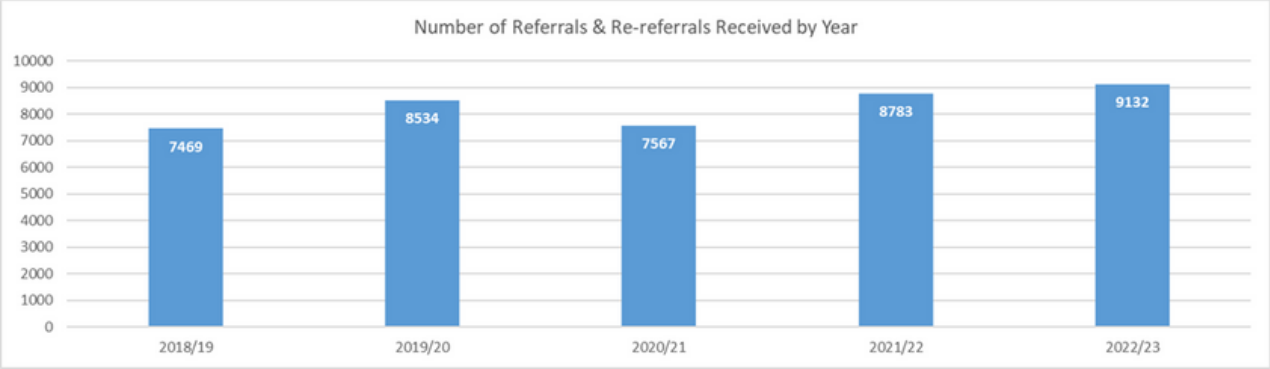
Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

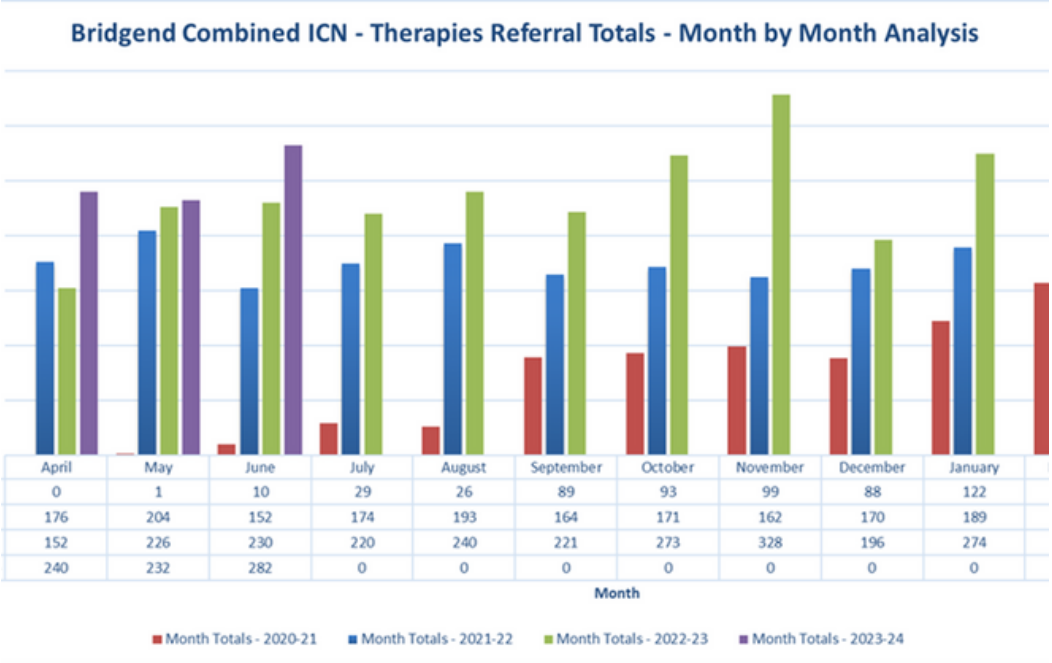
What we did

- Integrated community services have further consolidated the service delivery model that is based on multi-disciplinary working meeting the health and social care needs of an individual.
- We further developed the integrated complex dementia day service to allow people to access this service at localised hubs rather than travel to a centralised location
- We are continuing to explore ways of how we understand peoples experience of our services, including utilising people's stories at a senior manager and team level. We have also developed easy read information to enable feedback to be more accessible.
- We are exploring mechanisms of learning from compliments, complaints and stories and are embedding at all levels across adult services.
- We commissioned an independent opportunity assessment which is due to be completed in the next financial year and this has incorporated our strategic development of daytime opportunities.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

How well did we do





3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

What we are doing next

- Ensure that our integrated community services in Bridgend are sustained and enhanced in the new regional integrated model.
- Develop mechanisms to evaluate the impact of our integrated community services.
- Develop an action plan in relation to the outcome of the opportunity assessment.

It was a long referral and at the end [name] said “X I can’t tell you how it feels to actually speak to someone who wants to listen and help and who actually cares, I can’t thank you enough”.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care



Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

What we did

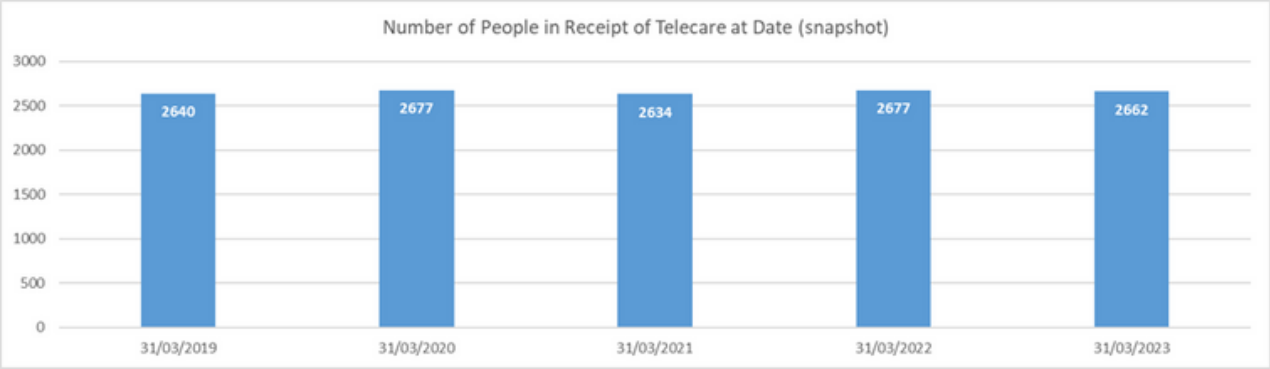
- Work began on the development of the local (BCBC-focused) Adult's Mental Health Strategy. An interim plan will be implemented in quarter 2 of 2023/2. This plan will be adapted following the publication of the national mental health strategy and will be regularly monitored by the joint operational group.

- Within our telecare service, the phased switchover from analogue to digital has begun and received excellent feedback about the quality of connection.

- The Continuous Improvement Group developed the final practice model for adult social care which was launched in April 2023 by the Deputy Leader and the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing. This model applies to all services, including integrated services, in addition we have aligned the Quality Assurance framework with his model to ensure our practice model is embedded to support continual service improvement.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

How well did we do



84% percentage of files which were audited through the annual Assuring Quality Framework, evidenced that the person is central to all activity undertaken as per the ASC practice model.

Since the commencing the phased implementation from analogue to digital within our Telecare service in January 2023, 418 people have made the switch.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

Case Study: A Strengths-Based Model Of Practice

In spring 2023, following a consultation period across Adult Social Care, a bespoke co-designed practice model of 'A STRENGTHS-BASED MODEL OF PRACTICE- WORKING TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES' was launched to practitioners across various disciplines within the service. The formalised practice model ensures a common approach based on key behaviours and activities founded on dignity, respect, within a collaborative relationship that understands people's strengths and abilities, and `how these can be harnessed to assist people to achieve their personal wellbeing outcomes'.

Managers and staff in Adult Social Care collaborated to produce the practice model and the following vision statement within it:

"*Your wellbeing is important to us in Bridgend Adult Social Care. We will strive to empower people to live an independent life, exercise choice and control, and be fully informed. We will work with you, with openness and honesty, listening to you, supporting you to live the life you want to live and the goals you want to achieve*."

Launch events in April and June 2023 were supported by Councillor Jane Gebbie, Deputy Leader and Claire Marchant, Corporate Director Wellbeing Directorate and hosted by Jackie Davies, Head of Adult Social Care.

The event was attended by approximately 60-65 delegates, and showcased the new practice model to practitioners whilst also acting as a celebration of practice over many years since the SSWBA was implemented and to acknowledge the progress that has been made in BCBC. The launch event showcased case studies, presented directly from staff who illustrated real life examples excellent practice.

Attendees of the events included a wide range of professionals, some of them being, Social Work practitioners, Occupational Therapist, Dementia Support Workers, District Nurses, Care Navigators, Dieticians, Physiotherapist and Speech and Language Therapist.





3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

What we are doing next

- Develop workstreams to take forward the local (BCBC-focused) Adult's Mental Health Strategy interim plan. Working with partners to support tier 1 services including crisis response and early intervention services.
- Continue the analogue to digital switch-over of our Telecare Services and increase the number of people who benefit from telecare.
- Design new pathways for Technology Enhanced Care that will utilise remote monitoring opportunities to mitigate the wider risks to independence.
- Embed our new practice model and Quality Assurance framework to ensure we have a systematic way to monitor practice that demonstrates strengths based outcome focused practice.

> It was a long referral and at the end [name] said "X I can't tell you how it feels to actually speak to someone who wants to listen and help and who actually cares, I can't thank you enough".

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

Case Study: Telecare

The Telecare service aims to support citizens in their own homes when they require additional support to remain independent. It offers the security of knowing someone can help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

All Telecare packages are tailored to each individual's needs to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for each individual. As each individual's needs change, the Telecare package can be adapted to best support them.

In 2017, BT announced plans to switch off their analogue telephone network by 2025 and replace it with an all-IP digital solution. The reason behind this decision is that the old network is no longer fit for purpose.

While 2025 is several years away, BCBC made the decision to become one of the first Welsh authorities to begin the switchover and are leading the way in digital technology implementation. Members of the project team regularly attend LIN meetings and update the other authorities on progress, next steps and lessons learnt.

£1.4 million funding for the project was agreed as part of the budget setting process and the project team manage this budget via the project team.

The project team are working closely with the approved contractor for the installations and maintenance contract, Care and Repair. The project is about to enter phase 4, where the remaining retrofit installations will take place by post code area. The 5th phase of the project will see business as usual installations taking place alongside the retrofit installations. In readiness for this, all installation documents have been refreshed and translated to Welsh where required.



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

Quality Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

What we did

- The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) has led safeguarding across the region, ensuring there are clear processes to support the implementation of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. The RSB has effectively led performance improvement by holding all partners to account, operating an effective sub-group structure, and commissioning, and monitoring implementation of recommendations from, practice reviews.

- The Council has designated senior managers for both Adults and Childrens Safeguarding.

- Adult Safeguarding is working in partnership with CTMSB and the Cwm Taf Workforce Development Team to deliver a programme of safeguarding workshops with a focus on improving practice aligned to areas identified within Adult Practice Reviews.

- BCBC has also contributed fully to participating in adult practice reviews learning events and provided Panel members and Chairs where required.

- We have held monthly Corporate Safeguarding Group meetings, chaired by the Corporate Director of Social Services & Wellbeing. A Safeguarding Data Dashboard is presented which provides safeguarding data from Childrens and Adult social care alongside relevant information from other Directorates including education, partnerships (which include community safety and VAWDASV and housing). The Corporate Safeguarding dashboard is reported to Cabinet Corporate Management Board.

- Bridgend Locality Safeguarding and Community Safety group (BLSCSG) meetings are held quarterly with wider partners including third sector, community safety and public protection.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Adult Social Care

- There is a fortnightly Joint Operational Group, chaired by the Deputy Head of Children's Social Care which has strengthened partner situational awareness and ensures timely action can be taken when it is needed by any partner to manage capacity in light of the high level of safeguarding contacts. There is an effective professional escalation process (known as CRISP) but the strong joint working has meant all professional escalations have been managed at local level in the last year without a need to escalate to the RSB.

- There are good working relationships with police, CTMUHB, independent sector and other statutory partners e.g. South Wales Fire and Rescue, WAST, Domestic Violence services etc. for the Community Safety Partnership, Channel Panel and the PREVENT agenda.

- BCBC has reviewed and revised the structure within the Adult Safeguarding and Secure Estates Team. Increasing capacity by the creation of a dedicated officer for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards / Liberty Protection Safeguards (DoLS/LPS). Alongside 1 Service Manager for Safeguarding and Secure Estate and 1 new Safeguarding Team Manager.

- BCBC has commenced preparation for the introduction of a new information sharing platform (GOSS) for Adults and Children MASH. This system will enable one of the recommendations of the Child T child practice review to be addressed.

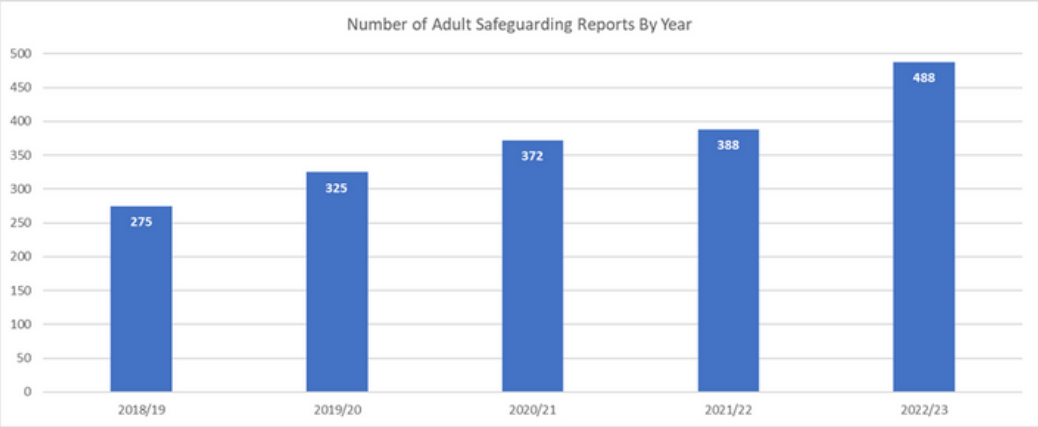
- BCBC has developed an escalation response which is activated by the Head of Adult Social Care to ensure critical care and support services are prioritised, where CTMUHB have declared Business Continuity Emergency status.

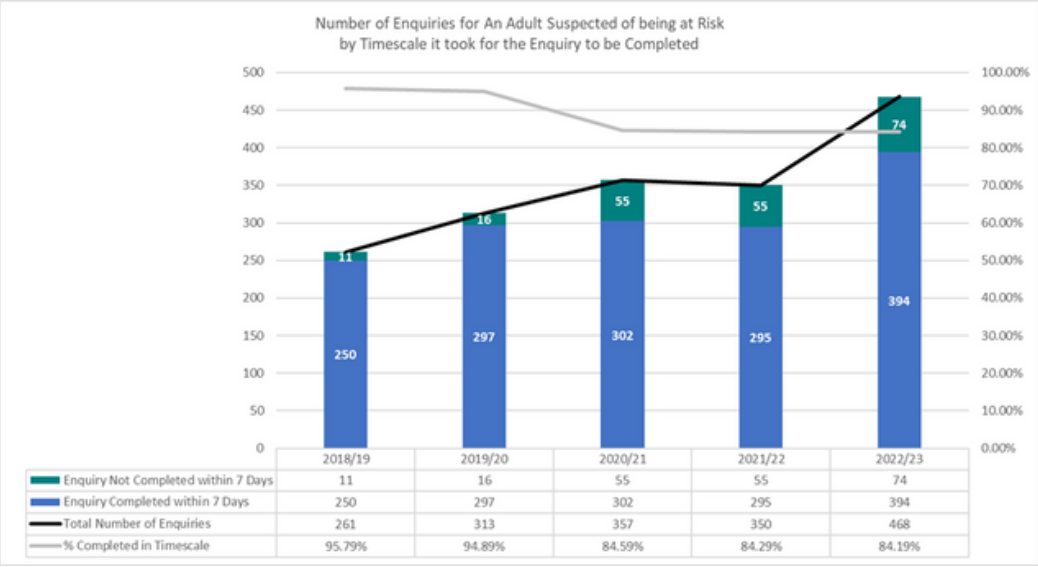
- Service Provider Review Panels have been set up on a bi-monthly basis to enable key partners to share information on the services we commission.

- Although, the implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) has been delayed by UK Government, Welsh Government agreed funding to further strengthen the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) process over the next year to ensure people in the community are not unlawfully detained in regulated and community settings and that their rights are safeguarded.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

How well did we do





What we are doing next

- Review our internal Dols processes to further strengthen our model ensuring the continued safeguarding of people's rights.
- Work with partners to implement the integrated safeguarding GOSS system which will enhance the sharing of information in relation to safeguarding individuals.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

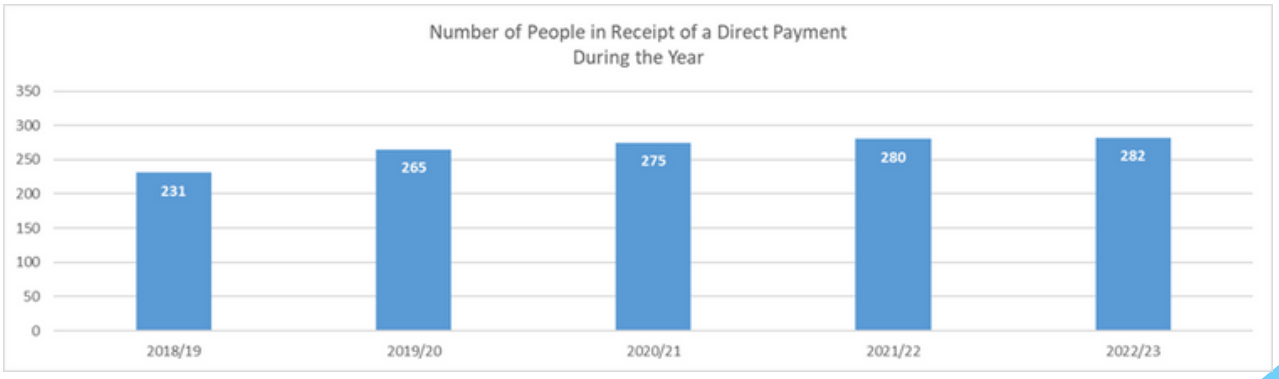


Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

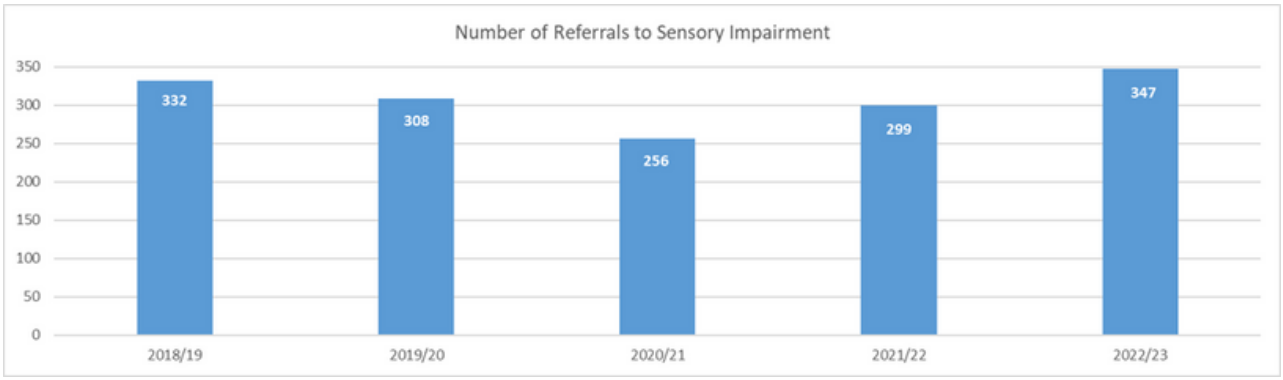
What we did

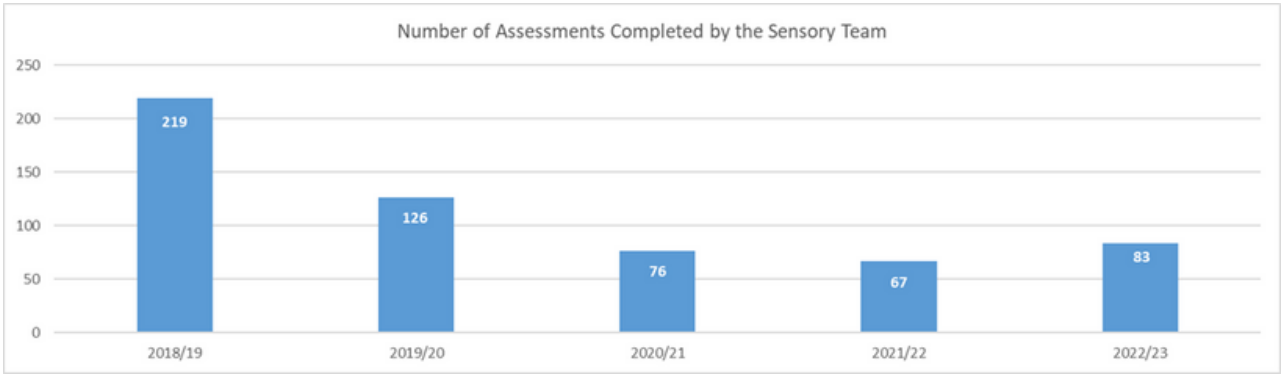
- In partnership with all stakeholders, day services have developed a robust Quality Assurance Tool to reflect the key values that underpin the principles of service delivery.
- A review of the adult social work arrangements has explored transition services for young people aged 14 to 25.
- In partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, 4 Community Hubs have been established and are strategically positioned across the borough to support people who are living with the effects of onset dementia.
- We appointed an external consultant to support the revision of the Direct Payments policy. A number of engagement sessions were held with parents and carers and the revised policy was agreed by Cabinet in June 2023.

How well did we do



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care





What we are doing next

- Continue to work in partnership with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board on consolidating current arrangements to develop seamless services in line with the dementia standards for Wales

- We will develop an action plan in relation to the outcome of the opportunity assessment. The action plan will be supported by a number of workstreams.

- We will continue to embed the newly launched practice model in Adult Social Care which focuses on the strengths of individuals and active participation within their communities.

My time at the Hub was unforgettable. The experience enabled me to get back into a working routine, form friendships and gain knowledge of what services the community has to offer.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care



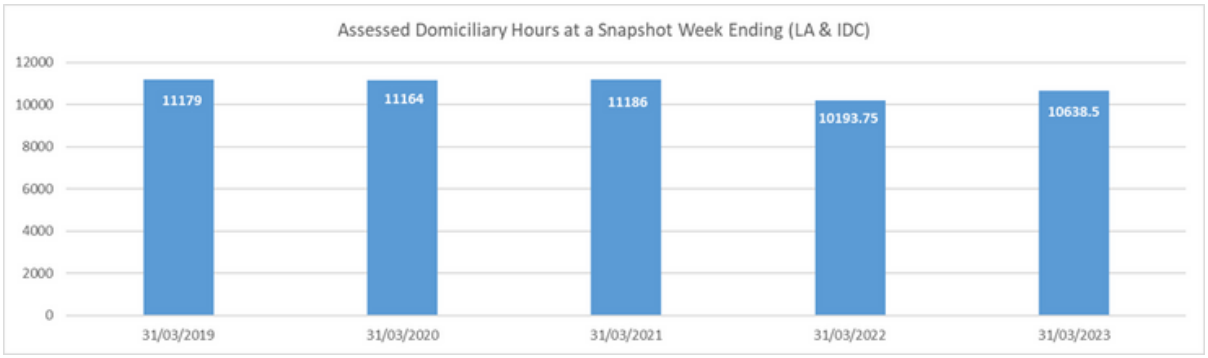
Quality Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

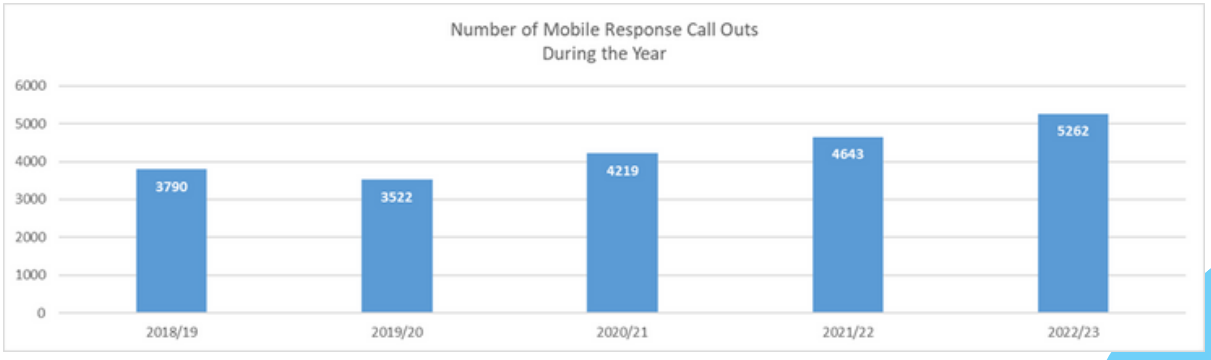
What we did

- To strengthen our complex dementia community and day services we established a specialist dementia resource at Bridgend Resource Centre and have recruited a Community Psychiatric Nurse and Occupational Therapist to the Haven - Complex Dementia Integrated Day Service.

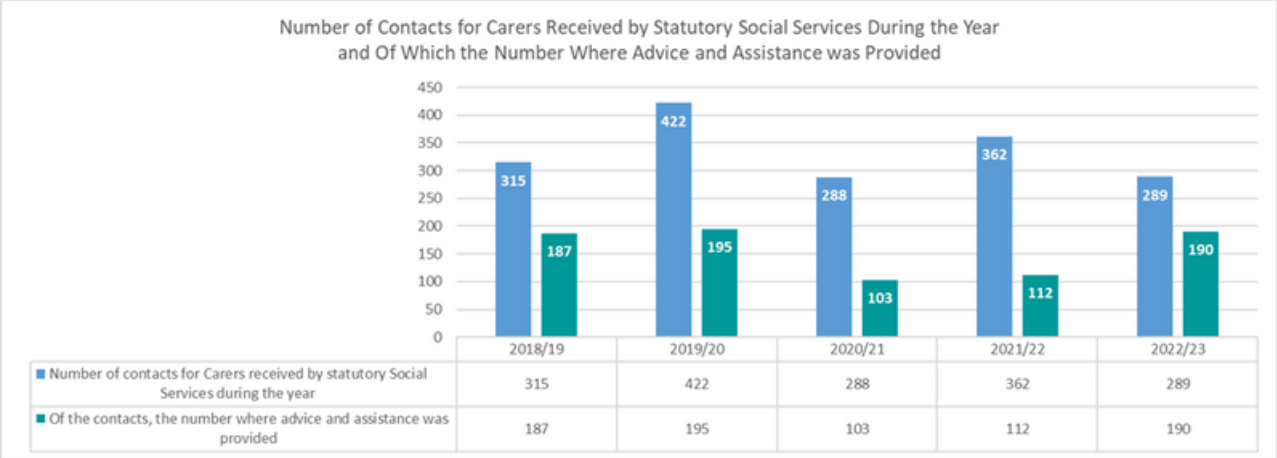
- To support the implementation of the 'Code of practice on the Delivery of Autism and Neurodiverse Services' we have designed a training plan for all staff working with people living with autism.

How well did we do





3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care



What we are doing next

- Review the dementia resource at Bridgend Resource Centre with a view to developing 'outreach' and community-based services and support models.
- Service development in line with national policy direction within our integrated community services which will include support at home workforce.
- Deliver the programme of training to support staff working with people living with autism and neurodiversity.

Many thanks, also on behalf of my brother X, for all the invaluable assistance you gave us before and in the lead up to getting respite care in place for X's partner X. You worked so hard, kept in touch and always had a positive word for us and your caring

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care

Case Study: Complex Day Centre and the Integrated Community Network Team

Mr A has lived with Alzheimer's Disease since he was 62 years of age. The progression of his dementia had increased over time. He now requiring 24-hour care and support. This was provided by his wife solely, as he had declined formal support with his care and support needs. His wife was increasingly finding this stressful and there was now significant risk of the situation breaking down and Mr A requiring a care placement.

To support this couple, their social worker had arranged for a Dementia Support Worker to assist them at home in developing and delivering meaningful activities, that would provide Mr A with positive experiences. This provided support for his wife in her caring role and provided her with ideas on how to approach and care for her husband when he became stressed. A close and trusting therapeutic relationship which was formed between the worker and the couple.

Care needs continued to increase, and the social worker and dementia support worker assessed that Mrs A now required additional therapeutic support in assisting her husband at times of emotional difficulty. A referral was made into the Complex Integrated Day Service. This service provides an opportunity for an integrated assessment from a community psychiatric nurse and occupational therapist. They develop a therapy program that can then be used at home by the family and also for staff who provide care and support. They can also offer respite and meaningful activities in a therapeutic environment, that will compliment care and support currently provided.

Mr A was initially unwilling to attend the Day Centre. The community psychiatric nurse met with Mrs A, the social worker and the dementia support worker and a stepped support plan was developed to encourage gradual engagement and support at the Complex Day Centre.

Initially Mr A would be supported away from the main day centre in a quiet space within the Unit. The community psychiatric nurse and dementia support worker would spend some time with Mr A engaging him in activities that were meaningful to him. Music of his choice was played, and a rapport established. This allowed him to slowly adjust to the new environment at his own pace.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Adult Social Care

Gradually over time, Mr A was supported to integrate and spend more time at the Centre. This allowed time to adjust and process his surroundings, before moving into the next area. The community psychiatric nurse and the dementia support worker supported Mr A through this staged introduction into the centre. When comfortable he was then introduced into the main section of the day centre where meaningful activities were developed for Mr A, supported by day services staff. Therapeutic plans were developed within the Unit, to support Mr A when he became distressed and these were explained to the wife and dementia support worker, so these could be adopted at home also.

Mrs A, has told to the community psychiatric nurse that she was ‘thrilled’ that Mr A has now agreed to attend and how impressed she was at the professionalism and helpfulness of all the staff she had encountered at the Complex Dementia Day Centre, as well as the invaluable support of the Dementia Support Worker. She has explained how this has supported them to continue to live together at home and reduced the stress she was feeling within her caring role.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Adult Social Care



Quality Standard 6: Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

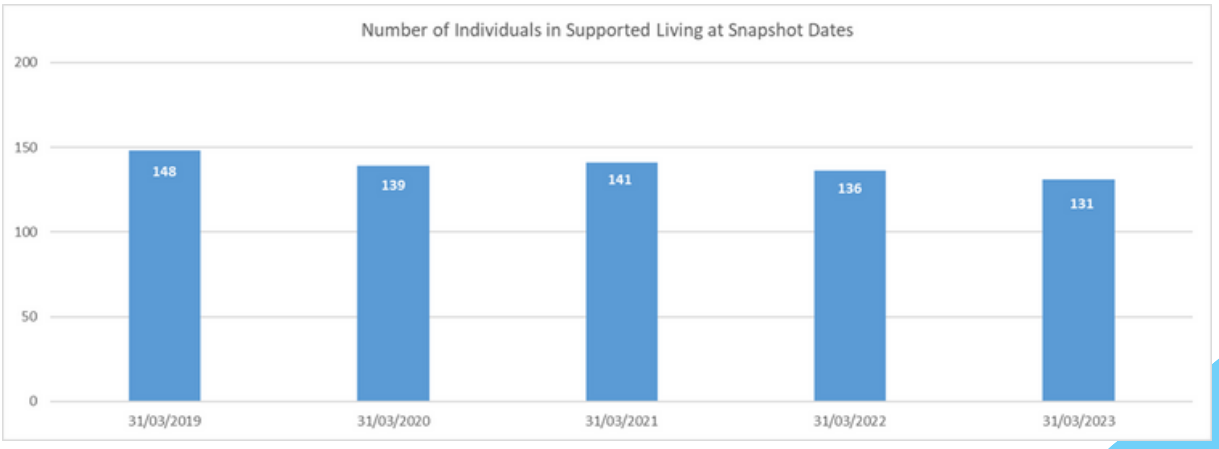
What we did

- Planning groups have been established across key population areas to develop Strategic Commissioning plans with a particular focus on accommodation based need ensuring suitable accommodation options are available to meet need.

- With our Housing colleagues, we have jointly commissioned an independent consultant to support the development of an accommodation strategy and residential services strategy for older people, which has fed into the commissioning strategies being developed. We have also established a Housing with Care Project Group, jointly chaired by senior managers within Social Services and Wellbeing and Housing.

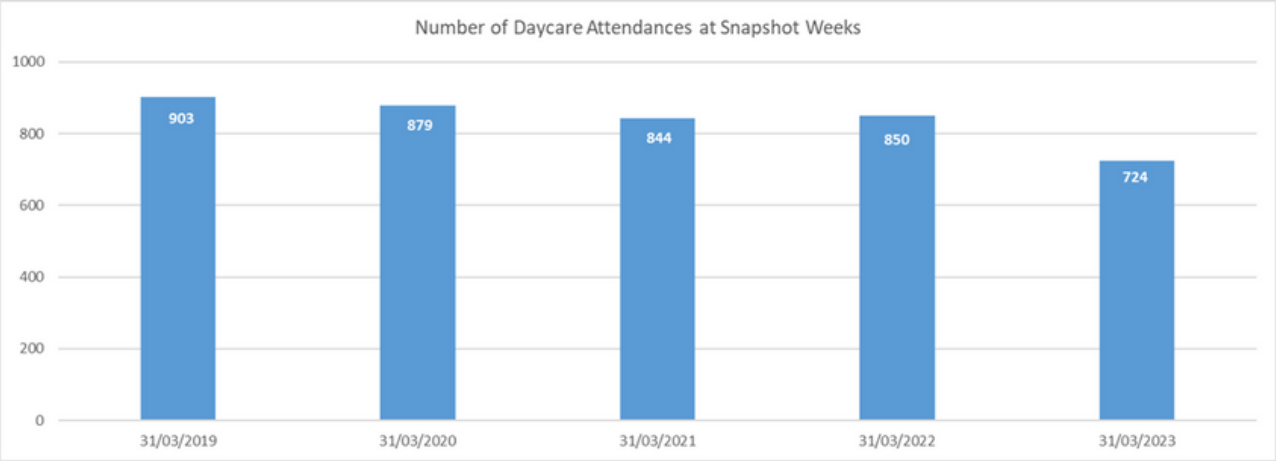
- To support the recruitment of staff within our Support at Home service, we have worked with the Corporate Communications Team and Engagement of Employability to develop promotional marketing materials and piloted the use of electric vehicles within the service.

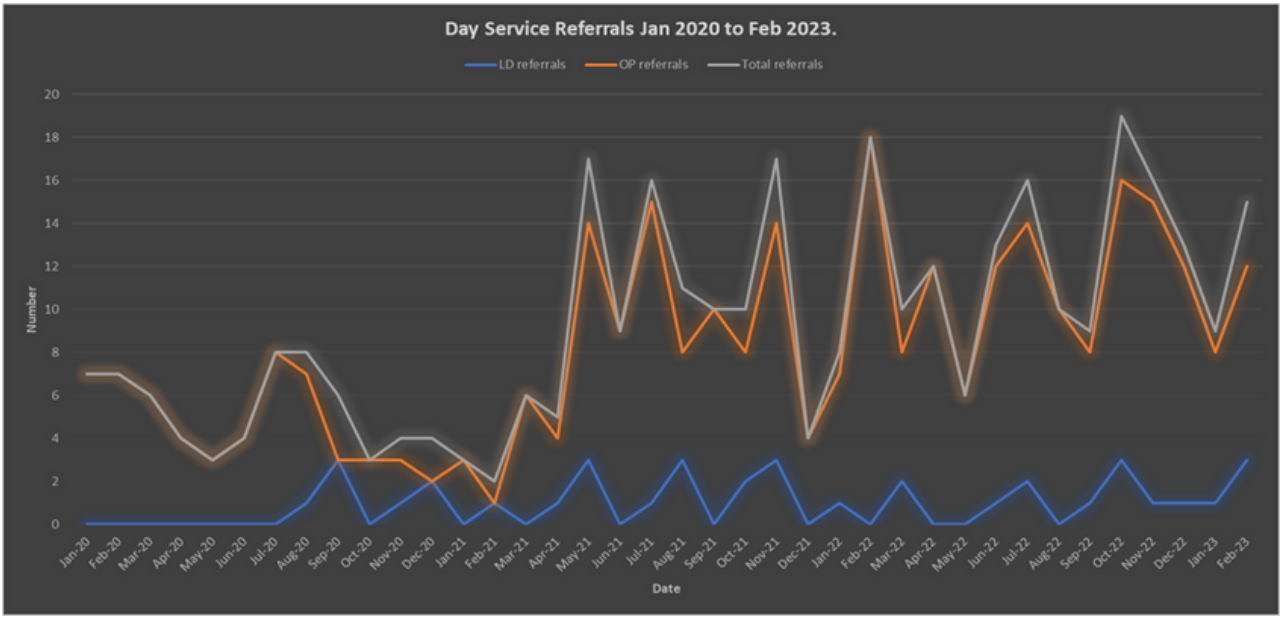
How well did we do



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Adult Social Care





What we are doing next

- In line with the 10-year regional capital strategy and local housing with care project group we will seek to identify accommodation options to meet population need.

- Develop an action plan in relation to the outcome of the opportunity assessment which will include a workstream to support young adults with a learning disability to develop employability skills.

Fabulous place, very supportive. Kind staff. Very homely place. Excellent staff. Nothing too much trouble, Enjoyed my short experience. Helped me through a very difficult time.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care

Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

What we did

- Focused improvement plans have been developed for all the service areas and are reviewed routinely with the Corporate Director.
    - We have begun to implement signs of safety as our practice framework. This framework ensures Social Workers work in partnership with families and other agencies, ensuring families and children are recognized as being the experts in their own lives. This will mean Social Workers communicate clearly in a way that can involve families and their children in a way children understand, so that families and children can develop their own safety plans.

- Our Directorate quality assurance framework was revised and launched in December 2022. This framework ensures we have managerial oversight of services and we analyse reviews and feedback to continuously develop and improve services.

- We have also implemented quality assurance framework for children's residential services.

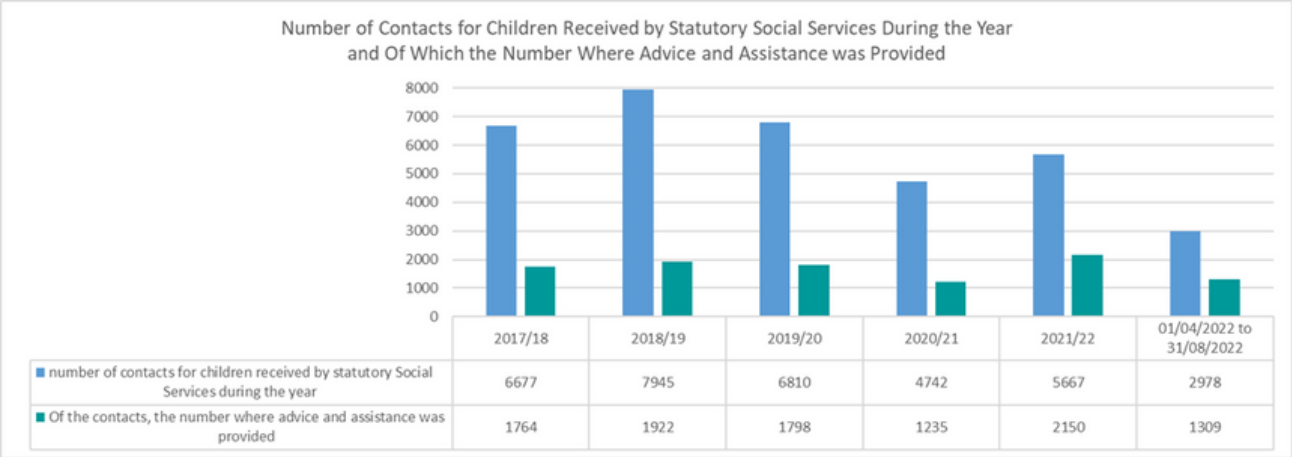
- The Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer has engaged with key staff, multi-agency partners, council members, care experienced children and care leavers through a variety of events and focused groups to develop and launch the Corporate Parenting Strategy resulting in a co-produced strategic document.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

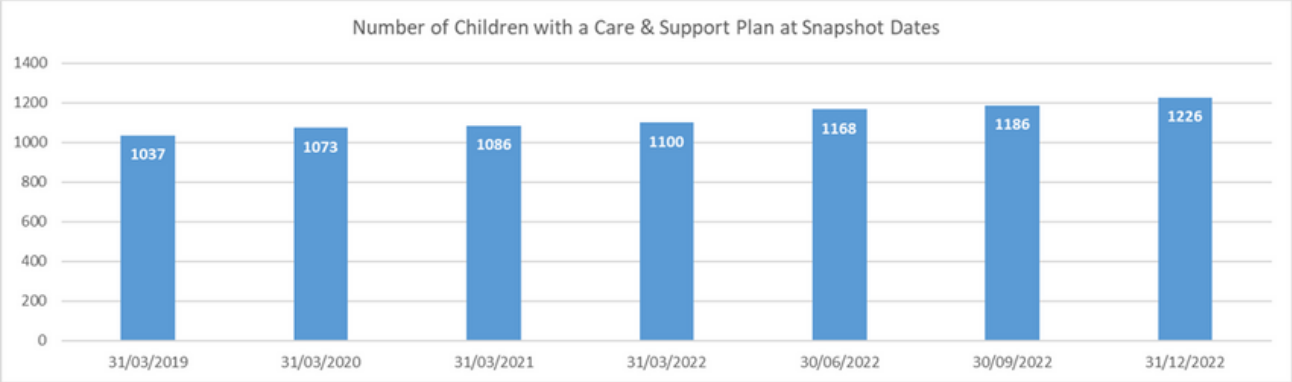
Children's Social Care

How well did we do





	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	01/04/2022 to 31/08/2022
number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year	6677	7945	6810	4742	5667	2978
Of the contacts, the number where advice and assistance was provided	1764	1922	1798	1235	2150	1309



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care

What we are doing next

- Develop an engagement and involvement framework so children and young people have an opportunity to become meaningfully involved in all aspects of the work of children's social care in Bridgend.
- The Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer will facilitate an action planning engagement event for the Corporate Parenting Board which will set out how the strategy will be implemented and its impact measured.
- Develop a parent's participation charter so the experience of the families who work with children's social care is understood and used enhanced practices and interventions.

'A' always updated me as the child's social worker, as well as the supervising social worker. She queried anything she was unsure of and provided feedback in a timely manner.

Case Study: Signs of Safety

Children Social Care is working with Wales' only Licenced Signs of Safety Consultant, Bev Edwards, to implement the Signs of Safety framework within Children's Social Care. Signs of Safety is a child protection framework which was developed in Australia in the 1990's and is now used in over 70 jurisdictions across the world, including a number of areas within Wales. The framework is hailed as being developed by Practitioners for Practitioners. Using a questioning approach, the model focusses on the strengths within families to ensure safety and good care. The framework uses assessment, danger statements and safety goals to assist Professionals and families through the child protection process. Families who have been involved in using this framework report to feel more positive about intervention, felt more included and more able to understand the process.

Children's Social Care introduced Signs of Safety to their workforce and partner agencies during two Launch days in March and through two multi agency workshops in April. This was not only an opportunity to introduce Signs of Safety to the workforce, but also to celebrate existing good practice that is already happening in Bridgend Children's Social Care (some examples below). The Leadership Team also presented their Leadership Promise, which highlighted their commitment to staff and the families they work with.

Since then, throughout May and June, Children's Social Care staff have been attending two days 'Risk Assessment and Next Steps' training which has provided workers with an understanding of how to use the Signs of Safety approach when undertaking risk assessment and next steps planning with families and professionals.

Through experiential learning, workers had an opportunity to build a better understanding of the Signs of Safety approach, the practice principles and by using their own case example's, workers were able to gain an understanding of the risk assessment, next steps planning and how to involve Professionals, children, their families and carers in the assessment process, in order to agree an immediate family safety plan.

Children's Social Care

Further to this training, Children's Social Care staff will be part of practice intensive days ensuring the understanding of the framework and how they can embed it within their practice with families, children and carers. Following these practice intensive days, they will undertake a further five-day training, which will give workers time to further develop their skills in using the framework and its tools.

In addition to the training there are a number of workstreams as part of the implementation which will consider meaningful measures, system alignment, leadership and management, learning and development and partner agencies.

Good Practice Examples

Social Workers and Social Work Assistants have provided examples of where they have used a number of creative direct work tools with children to help achieve positive outcomes:

'' I used the circle of control tool to activate a positive mindset in a young person who was frequently going missing and was at risk of CSE. This exercise helped raise awareness within the young person of the risks, it helped him to reflect and change his behaviour.''

''I created a sensory life story book for a young girl who is non-verbal and blind. She had been in foster care since birth and in time the life story book will be converted to audio for her to be able to listen to it and understand.''

''I used hierarchy of needs with a child to help identify what they were doing well, what they were not doing well and what needed to change for the better. I used wallpaper with a child and completed a timeline of their negative and positive experiences.''

''I worked with a family that had no trust in Children's social care and initially did not engage, I was consistent and reliable, this helped build trust through just doing what I said I would. This led to them agreeing to me work with their child and they shared their worries for us to address.''





3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care



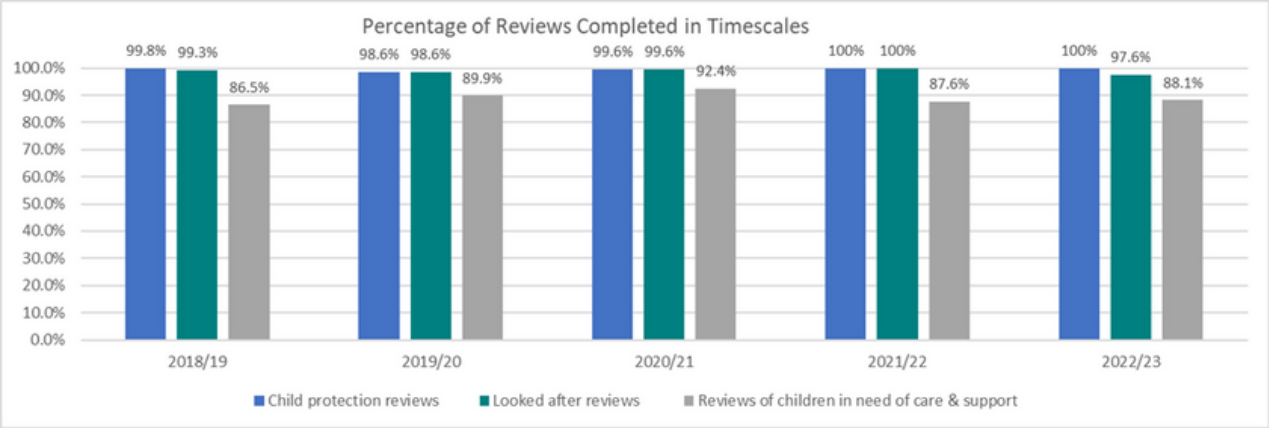
Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

What we did

- Leaders from children's social care and the health board have set up regular meetings to consider how we can work together more effectively to meet needs and promote better outcomes for children and young people.
- A system has been established to fast-track CAMHS assessments for care experienced children with highly complex needs.
- CAMHS colleagues have participated in stakeholder events and are working with us to extend our therapeutic services for care experienced children.
- Our advocacy provider, Tros Gynnal Plant has undertaken further work to raise awareness of their services. This has included presentations and the offer of support to Social Workers to promote the "Active Offer" to eligible young people and their carers.
- Foster carers, residential services staff and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO;s) proactively encourage children to access advocacy services.
- Tros Gynnal Plant participated in our corporate parenting pledge event and made the promise that "Care Experienced Children and young people in Bridgend, along with care leavers, are able to access good quality and responsive advocacy services at a time and place that suits them".

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care

How well did we do



Issue based Advocacy activity continued to increase during 2022-23.

We received referrals for 224 children and young people, who presented with 275 separate advocacy issues compared to 155 children and young people with 204 issues in 2021-22.

What we are doing next

- Implement the outcomes of an evidence based review into how we support children and families preventatively outside of statutory social care services.
- Develop an updated commissioning strategy for family support services.
- Develop a commissioning strategy for the provision of accommodation, care and support services for children with disabilities, working closely with education.

"I feel confident about asking questions without being scared to"

I now feel confident when I join meetings with social services. I can ask questions as well.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care



Quality Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

What we did

- The Director and Heads of Service for Adults and Childrens Social Care sit on the CTM Safeguarding Board. The Director operates as vice chair.
- The Director and officers of the Council are active participants on Board sub-groups and have chairing responsibilities. The Director chairs the exploitation sub-group.
- We worked in partnership with Board and the Cwm Taf Workforce Development Team to deliver a programme of safeguarding workshops with a focus on improving practice aligned to areas identified within Child and Adult Practice Reviews.
- We held monthly Corporate Safeguarding Group meetings, chaired by the Corporate Director of Social Services & Wellbeing. A Safeguarding Data Dashboard is presented which provides safeguarding data from Childrens and Adult social care alongside relevant information from other Directorates including education, partnerships (which include community safety and VAWDASV and housing.
- We created and successfully recruited to two specialist exploitation senior social worker posts within Childrens Social Care and continued engagement of an experienced interim group manager with an expertise in exploitation to embed new ways of working.
- We have developed an exploitation screening tool for early recognition and intervention and introduced multi-agency panel to support working with children and adults at risk of or experiencing exploitation.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Children's Social Care

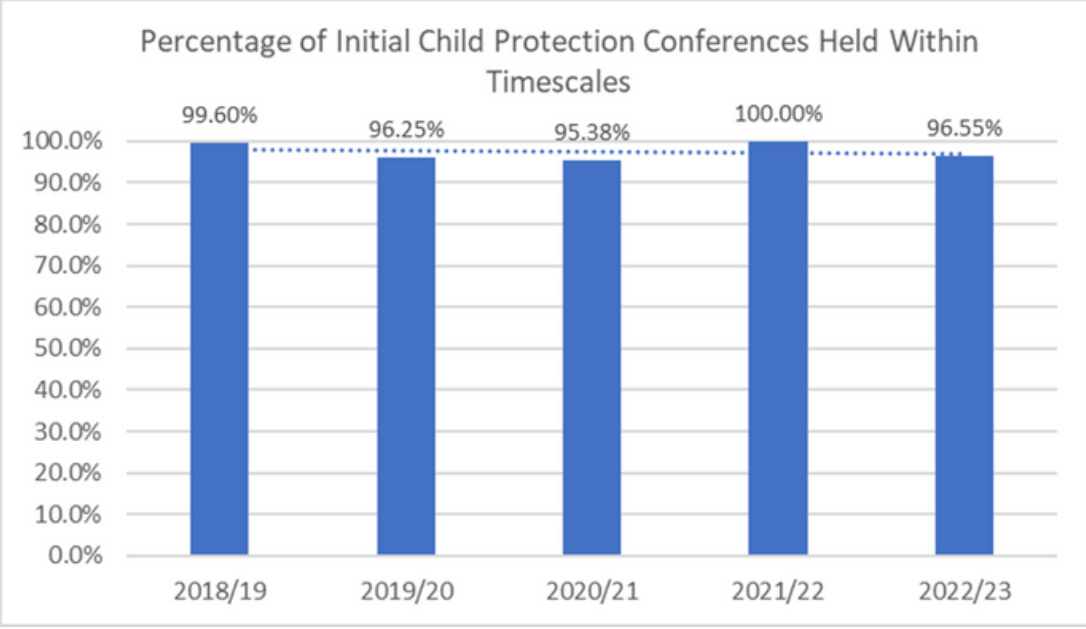
- We have delivered learning events and incorporated review findings into our in-house training including mandatory ‘Back to Basics’ safeguarding. We have introduced the Child Practice Review 7-minute briefings to quickly disseminate key learning.

- We completed a review of the operating model of IAA (Information, Advice and Assistance) services for Children and Families and have agreed the future design of the service.

- A Public Law Outline (PLO) team was piloted to test out the approaches required to support the implementation of the recommendations.

- We created and successfully recruited to a Corporate Safeguarding Officer post to support the Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing to ensure accountability, monitoring and reviewing of corporate safeguarding working arrangements ensuring Bridgend Council adheres to Government guidance and legislation relating to their safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

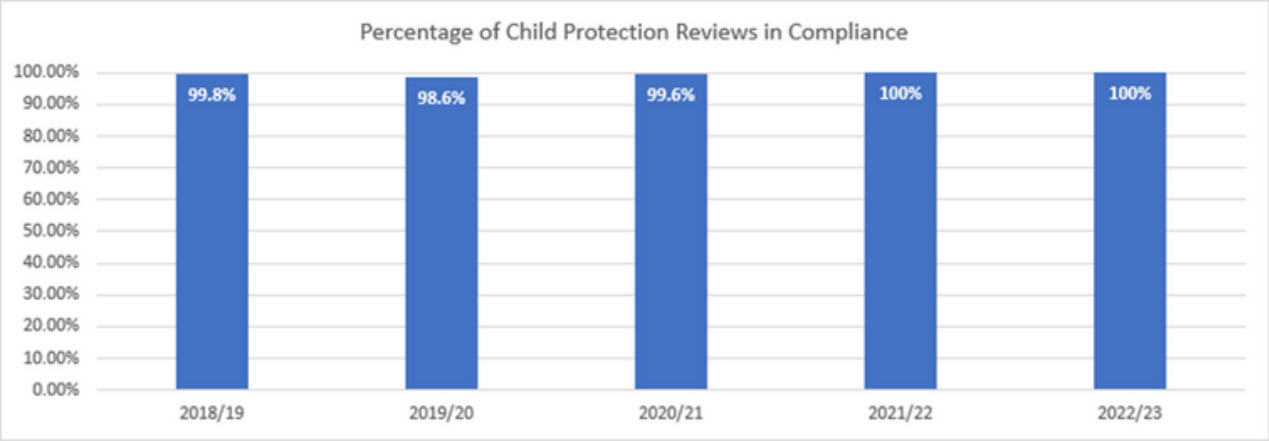
How well did we do

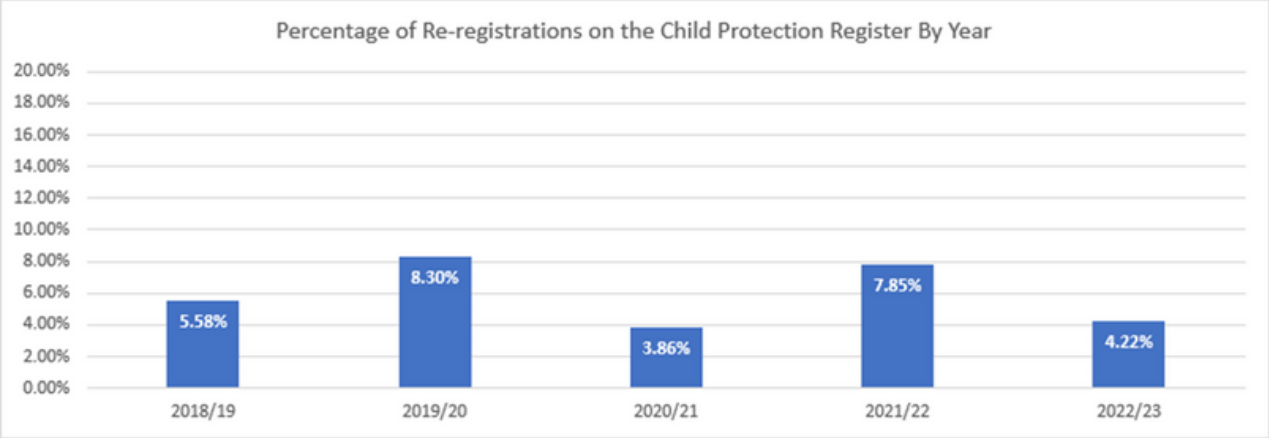


3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Children's Social Care

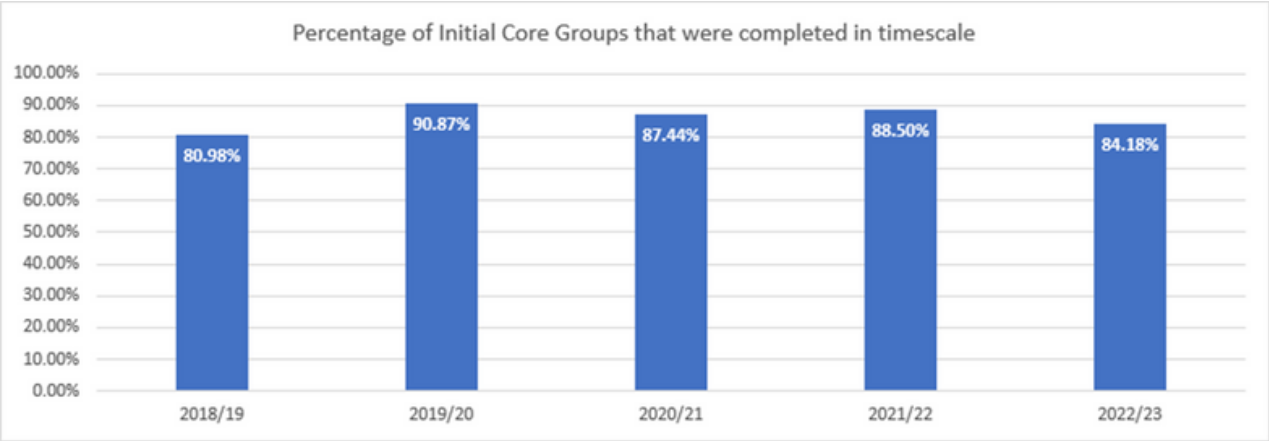
Safeguarding Training / Learning Event	Staff Attendance
Mandatory training programme 'Back to Basics Aim: To strengthen Social Work Practice' by creating a solid foundation and consistency of practice across Children's Social Care, Early years and Family Support.	153
Workforce Wellbeing Workshops & Team Evens Aim: Support workforce wellbeing and target specialist support to teams	241
Child Practice Review Workshops	





3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Children's Social Care



What we are doing next

- Ensure that learning from CPRs and other in-depth analysis is systematically embedded through learning, training and development and follow up quality assurance and review.
- Delivery of the 'Signs of Safety' programme as planned across the service.
- Implement our multi-agency exploitation strategy
- Ensure the recommendations from the Public Law Outline working group reforms are embedded in our operating models

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care

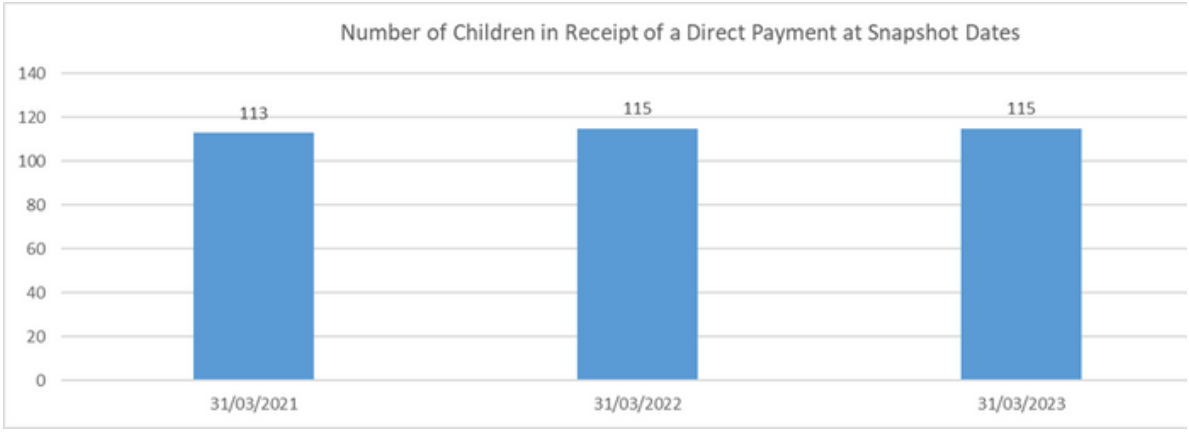


Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

What we did

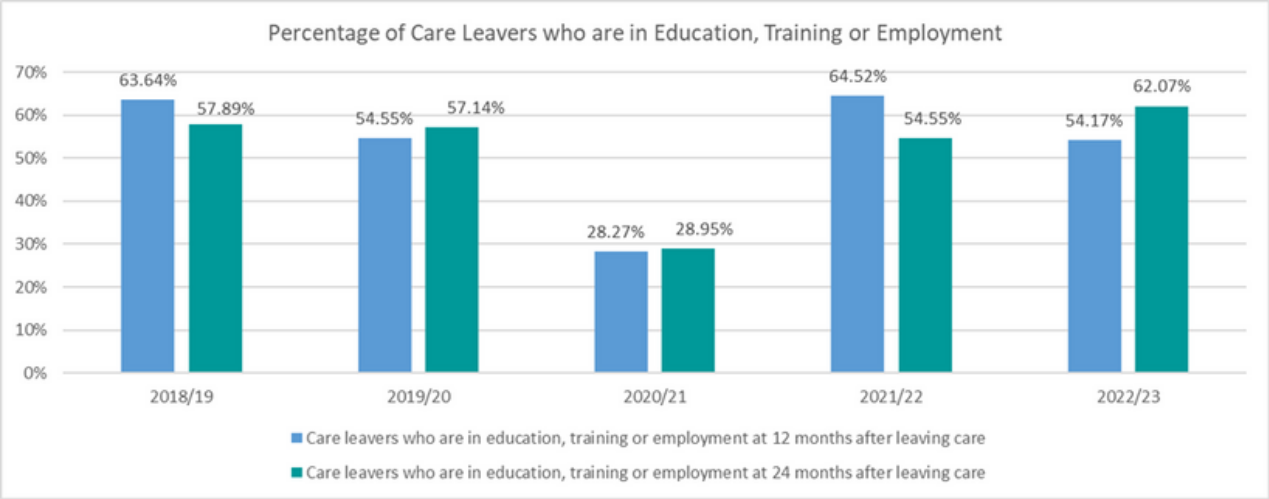
- We appointed an external consultant to support the revision of the Direct Payments policy. A number of engagement sessions were held with parents and carers and the revised policy was agreed by Cabinet in June 2023.
- We have established a children and young people's area planning board which will inform and finalise a commissioning strategy for disabled children and their parents/carers.
- We have implemented the Basic Income Pilot scheme for eligible care leavers which will conclude in June 2025.
- We have contributed to the national evaluation of the scheme commissioned by Welsh Government.

How well did we do



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Children's Social Care



What we are doing next

- Implement our Direct Payment Policy.
- Celebrate the achievements of our children and families with an annual celebration event.
- Using Shared Prosperity Funding. Appoint an Engagement and Skills Officer who will engage young people aged 19 or over who are leaving, or have just left, the care system and support them to build confidence in numeracy skills and refer eligible participants who are ready to gain accredited numeracy qualifications to the Bridgend Multiply Programme.
- Improve the Personal Education Plan process and consider how this aligns with the Individual Development Plan approach.
- Improve the school attendance of care-experienced children,
- Reduce the number of care-experienced children who are on a reduced timetable.

Just wanted to show case a lovely piece of work completed by X talking a child through the process of getting him back to school. Well done X another excellent piece of child focussed and child friendly work.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care



Quality Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

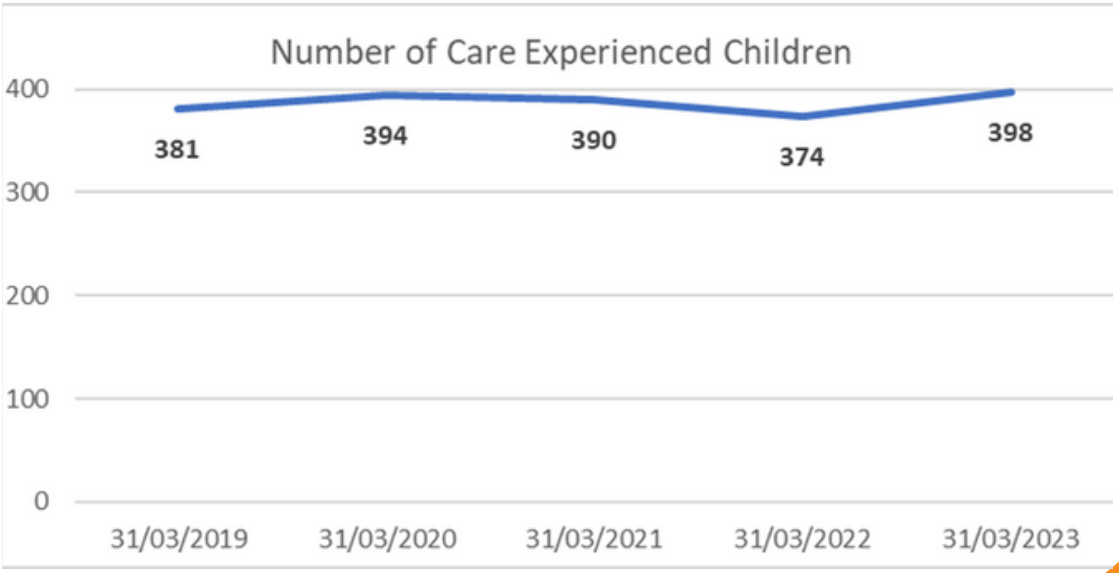
What we did

- Multi Agency Permanence Support Service continues to provide specialist support for care experienced children. This includes assessments, therapy and trauma informed carer training.

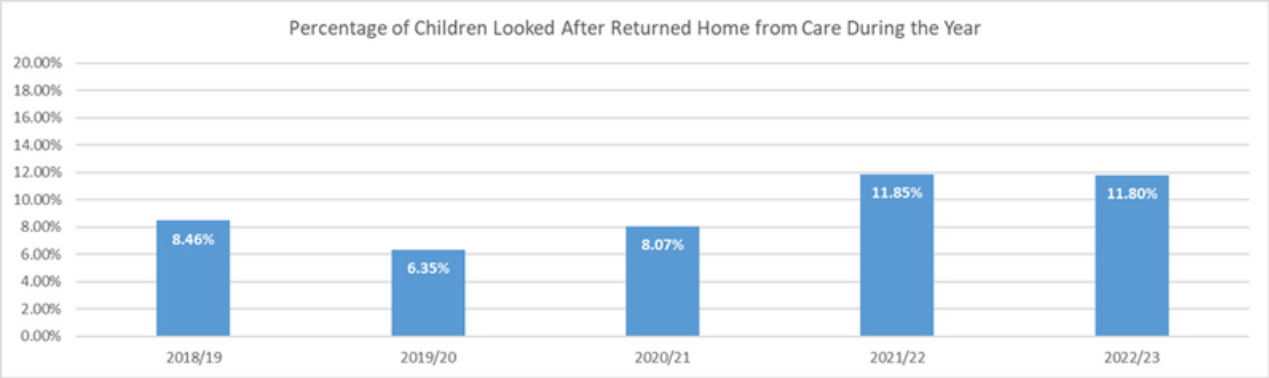
- The care experienced children reduction strategy is in place and part of its focus is on supporting special guardianship orders to ensure permanence. We have increased the number of special guardianship orders granted by 46% this year.

- Construction of the Golygfa'r Ddôl (formerly the Brynmeyn Children's Hub) is complete and it is anticipated that the hub will open in the Autumn.

How well did we do



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care



What we are doing next

- Implement our care experienced children reduction strategy by safely reducing admissions and introducing an evidence-based framework to enable practitioners to make good judgement about the potential for safe reunifications and alternative orders / permanency arrangements.

- Commission and implement a placement support service to ensure the right multi-agency therapeutic input for children, young people and their carers.

'Y' advised that the advice given has been very helpful and the strategies suggested by 'D' have already made a great difference to the family.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Children's Social Care



Quality Standard 6: Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

What we did

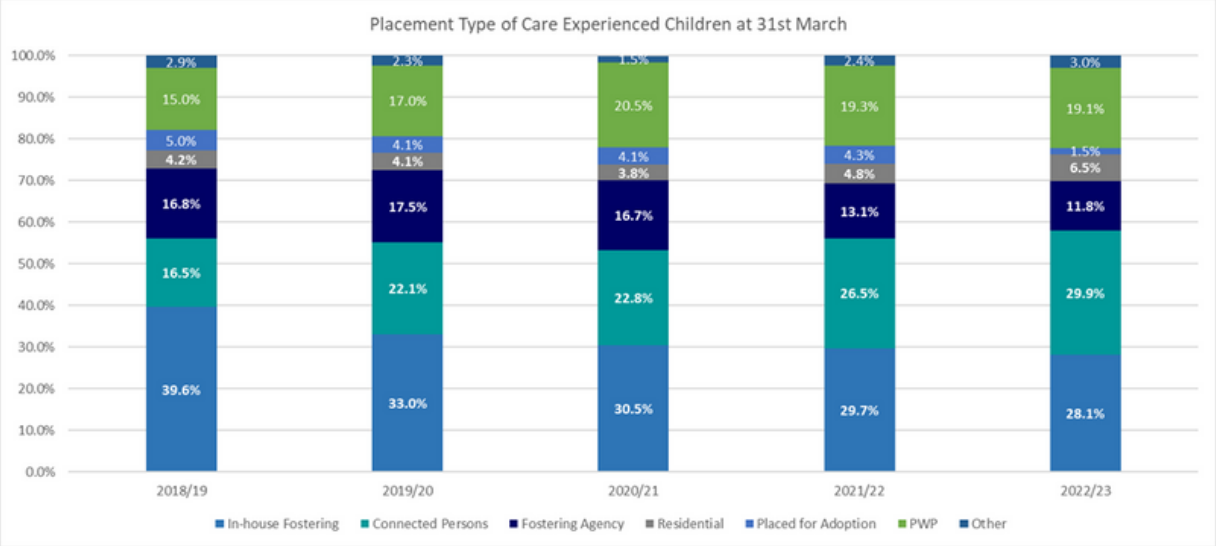
- The Foster Carer Charter was approved by the Corporate Committee Corporate Parenting Board and an implementation plan is in place to embed the principles.
- Following a review of Foster Carer allowances, Cabinet approved the increase of 5.5%. In recognition of the cost-of-living challenges, we utilised grant funding to provide an additional £100 payment to all foster carers.
- The solo residential provision was registered in November 2022 and has continues to offer a safe environment in line with children's assessed need.

How well did we do

General Foster Carers	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of initial enquiries to foster received	142	104	96	54
Number of initial home visits/initial assessments conducted	49	43	25	22
Number of fostering assessments commenced	14	27	17	8
Number of new General Foster Carers approved	8	16	4	5

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Children's Social Care



What we are doing next

- Complete the establishment of the children's assessment hub and commence provision.
- Develop and embed a therapeutic placement support contract for children with complex needs across our residential and fostering service, to address placement stability and sufficiency in preparation for the WG eliminating profit policy.
- Continue to work with Foster Wales to recruit a sufficient number of carers to provide foster placements within the local authority.
- Work with regional partners in Cwm Taf Morgannwg ensure there is sufficient quantity and quality of flexible provision for children who's needs cannot be met in standard residential or fostering provision

The CSW and Uncles were complimentary about the support that A and B offered to X and Y to make X's transition smooth. X said they went above and beyond and went out of their way to give X continuity and share information. They welcomed X and Y to their home resulting in a successful move.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service



Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co- produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

"It gives us all company, exercise and you make friends. That's a huge part of your life when you live on your own"

What we did:

- We continued to develop co-production opportunities with Carers and Young Carers. The Young Carers network is providing more “voice and choice” and via our continued partnership with BAVO a review of the resilient communities preventative support model and related workforce was completed.
- With the assistance of external funding we have been able to work with HALO to expand the “Feel Good for Life” opportunities. A peer review panel is in place to improve services.
- BAVO and Alzheimers Society have worked in partnership with communities and groups to support them in being more dementia friendly. Alzheimers and AWEN have begun developing cultural opportunities including dementia friendly library spaces.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Prevention & Wellbeing Service

How well did we do?:

- The community navigators supported 677 people in the community including the provision of training to 213 representatives of community groups on preventative opportunities. 176 people were more aware of volunteering opportunities.

- The young carers network has engaged over 280 young carers and young adult carer ambassadors are leading the network group. Wellbeing workshops were co-produced and ran, in partnership with young carers, a series of “You are Valued” days. The National young carers card scheme was enabled to support access to wellbeing activities. The carers wellbeing service was co-designed with unpaid carers.

- The Feel Good for Life programme has supported 200 people living with Dementia and their carers in physical and mental wellbeing support programmes. The National Lottery has provided 5 years investment to further progress the work and develop learning and insight.

What are we doing next:

- Continue to work with people living with dementia or cognitive impairment and carers to co-design services and opportunities.

- Invest in increasing the knowledge and skills of co-production amongst workforce and teams.

- Bridgend carers wellbeing service to engage with unpaid carers and connect to community based support

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service

Case Study: Feel Good for Life

The Feel Good for Life programme delivered by Halo Leisure supports people living with dementia or cognitive impairment to manage their wellbeing and reduce loneliness.

Jeff became a full time carer for his wife when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and also developed severe sight loss. Taking on domestic tasks as well as caring responsibilities created challenges.

" The need to escape becomes a daily response when your stress levels peak from the intensity of looking after someone 24/7".

The Feel Good for Life programme helped Jeff and his wife connect with others and also linked him to improving knowledge of nutrition, relaxation and supportive information and contacts. Jeff also feels that he is closer to other carers who understand his situation.

"I have met some lovely people who understand what I am going through and felt great support from speaking to them. It was good to listen to how others manage their day and have the opportunity to listen and share".



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service



Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

"Having a mentor like 'X' was great. It really helped me understand that no matter what might be going on in your life you could still achieve things and reach your goals"

What we did:

- We have worked collaboratively with BAVO to support them in co-ordinating a range of community representative networks that support the prevention and wellbeing agenda.
- Our National Exercise Referral Scheme is now fully operational. The scheme includes opportunities for digital access and the chronic conditions pathway has been expanded.
- As part of the Play sufficiency assessment we worked with young people and families with engagement conducted via the Bridgend Inclusive Network Group. We have also scoped opportunities to develop Disability Sport.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service

How well did we do?:

- 141 people attended community networks led by the third sector. 28 thematic network meetings were held in relation to prevention and wellbeing enabling 600 people to gain knowledge to manage their issues and included signposting to resources in the community. We worked with 11 partners to support the development of a carer friendly network group in growing collaborative approaches.

- The National Exercise Referral Scheme has developed new pathways focused on joint care and wellbeing. 1539 referrals were received in the year with 903 people attending initial consultations.

- Bridgend Inclusive Network Group has delivered training and helped build capacity in third sector groups, increasing the partners involved in the network. The Discovery Days programme progressed it's focus and is supporting young adults through transition to build life skills and community connections. The play sufficiency assessment and action plan has recognised the need to support diverse needs including disability, care experienced, young carers and safeguarding concerns.

What are we doing next:

- Identify how direct payment based approaches can support people to have more voice and control in regard to their wellbeing.

- Work with BAVO and broader third sector partners to rebuild and expand capacity to support people to live well in their communities.

- Increase our engagement in regard to people with diverse needs to shape and develop community based opportunities.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Prevention & Wellbeing Service



Quality Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm

What we did:

- A lead role, supported by Welsh Government has been established for a period of 2 years to support the development of Age Friendly Communities
- Training course held to increase activity delivery workforce and postural stability has been embedded in community activity programmes.
- New National Dementia Standards have been created which will influence how advising and supporting people should be progressed. A number of community based wellbeing opportunities have been co-produced to support people living with dementia or cognitive impairment.

How well did we do?:

- A specific Age Friendly Communities Lead has now been appointed and will build a Bridgend Age Friendly Network that engages partners and stakeholders. This will focus on how the 8 domains can improve the lives of older adults and bring generations of people together. Bridgend aims to become a part of the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Communities.
- BCBC has supported Care and Repair to co-ordinate a range of partners to operate a Falls Prevention Network Group. Community activity staff as part of the older adults programme have been delivering physical wellbeing programmes to build strength and mobility, peer support and social connections in local communities. Digital approaches to supporting carer wellbeing have also been developing with Cwmpas.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service

- Our partnership with Alzheimers supported Dementia Connect activities, activity programmes as well as carers information and support. Community based activities supported over 400 users per quarter via multimedia approaches. 100% felt they were better able to make decisions, their adviser understood their needs and would recommend this service to others.

What are we doing next:

- Make further progress on building an Age Friendly Communities network of partners that includes a One Council collaborative approach to support older adults and bring communities together.
- Review the approach to providing advice and support that people living with Dementia or cognitive impairment require in line with the new National Dementia Standards and regional approaches to developing Life Guide roles.
- Develop the next phase of the Connecting Carers programme with partners and align to available resource.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Prevention & Wellbeing Service



Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

"It has made such a difference for me to see different things on-line and look for information like health and medical conditions....something I thought I'd never need really"

What we did:

- We have continued to operate the Super Agers programme and have secured investment from core preventative funding and external revenue to continue to support those aged 60 plus.

- An evaluation of community transport is ongoing which has identified the barriers to strategically develop different preventative approaches within communities. The directorate has continued to support the Bridgend Community transport service which has supported large numbers of day services visits per week and also the Town Rider scheme to connect people to community based wellbeing opportunities..

- By utilising social prescribing approaches linked to CTM Health Board and Regional Integration Funding we have been able to further develop opportunities for young carers, older adults, unpaid carers and whole household wellbeing.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service

How well did we do?:

- 76% of Super Agers participants valued the social components with 69% being more physically active and 64% improving strength, mobility and flexibility. There were positive improvements to mental wellbeing scores and a recognition of community support networks and reduction in loneliness.

- The books on wheels service has issued 48840 physical resources to our more vulnerable residents at home and this does not include digital and e-resources. Our libraries have also supported warm hub programmes and engagement with older adults on ageing well priorities.

- BCBC has retained 3 local community co-ordinators providing preventative support to over 150 beneficiaries per month. A broad range of referral partners have engaged with the service. Community navigator roles within the third sector are complementing this approach to community resilience. Awen supported a specific development post and social prescribing activities and Halo created specific roles for older adult interventions and children/young people

What are we doing next:

- Work collaboratively with community partners and across social care to identify how support can be developed for our more vulnerable citizens.

- Further evaluate the accessibility of community based preventative activities and how barriers can be mitigated including transport, community hub approaches and digital resources.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service



Quality Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy, domestic, family and personal relationships

"Mr and Mrs 'X' have made great friends with another couple attending the programme and have since attended other community groups. They feel like they are starting to build a community for themselves here in Bridgend"

What we did:

- Annual wellbeing support opportunities have been jointly developed between Children's Social Care and the Prevention and Wellbeing service to support hub programmes, trauma support and transition into communities.
- We engaged with unpaid carers to review the Carers Wellbeing Service and co-produced a new service specification. The new contract was established in April 2023.
- We operated a range of programmes to further develop family and whole household support activities. These included the Family Active Zone, Made for Mams and Early Years opportunities.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP
Prevention & Wellbeing Service

How well did we do?:

- Young carers are now fully involved in the co-production of opportunities. 170 young carers attended social opportunities and the partnership with BING is supporting 40 parent carers of children and young people with additional needs. Support for care experienced children has developed new pathways linking to community transition.

- The Carer Wellbeing Service supported 1582 individuals. There were 410 'What Matters' conversations and 581 people received information, advice or assistance including signposting. Of these, 194 full assessments were requested via the Common Access Point. Most referrals came from adult social carebut 177 came from other partners. There were 356 carers supported not previously identified. The carers assessment pathway has been reviewed.

- New family support programmes were developed including Happy Hands which supported 42 families, the Ti a Fi programme which also supported 42 families and early years play support for 54 families. Pre and post-natal activity training was delivered to 26 people and 100 early years resources created to support families. The FAZ programme has developed new digital approaches to maximise access.

What are we doing next:

- Develop a more consistent approach and easier to understand pathway in relation to full carer assessment and how that links to lower level "What Matters" conversations. Encouraging a broader range of third sector partners to work collectively and more collaboratively for the benefit of carers.

- Further develop targeted supportive opportunities within community settings, for care experienced children as part of the corporate parenting strategy, young people with safeguarding concerns, young carers and children with additional needs.

- Continue to build partnership working to support family wellbeing and resilience and early years supportive opportunities.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service

Case Study: Young Carers Network

During the year there has been co-production taking place with young carers and young carer ambassadors to develop a network that helps meet their needs. This has connected to a new young carers identity card that has seen 303 cards issued to young carers. The aim of the card has been to improve the visibility of young carers and to help more partners and stakeholders understand how they can help. The young carers have led the development of 10 awareness raising events and there has been partnership working with 10 local businesses to add value to the card scheme. As part of the network a series of 'we are valued' days have been supported with 165 young carers and their friends attending. These have been in partnership with local schools who have been creating support networks within school settings. During the year, the young carers ambassadors were recognised within the High Sheriff's Awards for their work in developing the young carers network.



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service



Quality Standard 6: Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic wellbeing, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets needs

What we did:

- We secured a broad range of investment to support delivery, community development and Third Sector opportunities. New investment streams are in place for 2023/24.
- An online streaming pilot was developed with unpaid carers in community settings. This included equipping community venues to deliver activities that supported physical and mental wellbeing

How well did we do?:

- The Summer of Fun programmes were delivered and the Holiday Playworks programmes supported young people known to social care. Targeted leisure access programmes were put in place for young carers and children with disabilities. We invested in a range of community led initiatives where needs had been identified by people with lived experience.
- The Connecting Carers programme in collaboration with Cwmpas supported 154 unpaid carers and engaged 31 community partners in network groups. Streamed support relating to anxiety management and mindfulness in community settings was developed. 6 new local services/opportunities were created. There were 76 people who reported improved awareness of local/regional support. A new carer wellbeing course was developed with social care recovery funding.

3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Prevention & Wellbeing Service

What are we doing next:

- Continue to target investments to support networks of vulnerable groups enabling them to have ownership and control of their wellbeing
- Develop leadership and employability programmes to build skills amongst young people including those who are more vulnerable.
- Develop additional resources with Cwmpas to support unpaid carers to manage their wellbeing and have lives beyond caring.

"The whole service has been outstanding. A complete support service. We have since had an ASD diagnosis, supportive services and a whole lot of relief for my brother"

4. How we do what we do



Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

Our workforce are our most valued resource and the recruitment and retention of staff continues to be a significant risk with challenges faced across the whole Directorate.

To support this challenge we progressed a number of key actions:

- Implemented a review of the social work operating model for adult social care and of operating models in children's social care to ensure the Council is best able to support people.
- Undertook an international recruitment campaign, successfully appointing 10 social workers who have either commenced in post or will be starting shortly. We will appoint up to 20 international recruits in the next year.
- Worked with other Welsh local authorities to agree a Memorandum of Cooperation to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of the engagement of agency social workers.
- Implemented social work support officer roles across children's social care to reduce the 'non social worker' tasks that professional social workers undertake.
- Agreed Corporate support to ensure all vacant posts are covered with a number of teams operating above establishment to meet need in a timely way and keep caseloads at a reasonable level.
- Created and successfully recruited to two specialist exploitation senior social worker posts within Childrens Social Care and continued engagement of an experienced interim group manager with an expertise in exploitation to embed new ways of working.
- Supported the recruitment of staff within our Support at Home service by:

    - working in partnership with the Corporate Communications Team and Engagement of Employability to develop promotional marketing material;
    - Reviewing the rota arrangements to move away from 'split shifts'
    - and piloted the use of electric vehicles within the service.

4. How we do what we do

- Funded the appointment of a Marketing and Communications officer to support the Directorate to promote positively the opportunities in Bridgend social care.

Professional development is a key factor in supporting the recruitment and retention of staff. To ensure our staff feel valued and supported our Social Care Workforce Development Team develop and implement key training, learning and development opportunities:

What we did

We supported social care staff to develop their skills by:

- Continuing to work in partnership with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Dementia Care Training Team to deliver a comprehensive programme aligned to the Good Work Framework and will be extended to include to informal carers.

- Managers, team leaders and support staff attending Active Support Training in the Supported Living Service, leading to a positive impact on enabling care being reported.

- Launching the Signs of Safety Practice Framework Framework across Children's Social Care and the Strength Based Outcome Focussed model across Adult Social Care.

- Providing an enhanced range of e-learning available to Foster Carers and Children's Residential staff via The Training Hub.

- Delivering a mandatory safeguarding 'Back to Basics - Strengthening Social Work Practice' training programme designed to create a solid foundation and consistency of practice across Children's Social Care, Early years and Family Support.

4. How we do what we do

- Utilising Welsh Government grant funding (approx. £54K) to deliver preparatory training in both Adults and Children's Services in Liberty Protection Safeguards awareness; assessing mental capacity, best interests, and preparing for the Court of Protection, and court skills. We also delivered awareness training for direct care managers and seniors across BCBC, the independent and voluntary sectors.

- Working in partnership with Cwm Taf Workforce Development Team and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding board to deliver a programme of safeguarding workshops with a focus on improving practice aligned to areas identified within Child and Adult Practice Reviews.

- The creation of a manual handling training/assessor post. The postholder is working with community occupational therapists and other professionals to provide support and advice to those caring for a family member at home.

- Launching the Directorate's Social Work and Occupational Therapy Teams Charter during our Celebration of World Social Work day event in March 23 which was attended by 60 staff.

- Supporting workforce wellbeing as a priority, targeting specialist support to teams and workshops General wellbeing support is available from on-line resources provided by the Directorate and the Council.

- Reviewing our Supervision Policy and Practice Guidance to ensure they are more closely aligned to a focus on strengths, outcomes, and a reflective approach. This was supported by a commissioned training programme for supervisors and supervisees in assessment and case management, and direct care services.

- Commencing the development of and preparation to deliver an induction and core training programme for staff who will be working at a new Children's Residential Home due to open in the summer of 2023.

- Modelling a culture of compassionate leadership which is firm, fair and kind;

- Delivering a bespoke leadership management development programme with our Improvement Partner and working with the partner to support team development planning.

4. How we do what we do

We supported qualifying pathways to careers in social care and social work by:

- Creating a Social Care Assessor post to support authority and independent domiciliary and residential provider service managers to provide a through supportive induction for new social care workers; and then to progress on to a Health and Social Care Diploma which will allow staff to develop and demonstrate competence in their social care role.

- Continuing to provide secondment opportunities for staff to undertake the BSc Social Work degree at Bridgend College with 4 staff commencing in September 2022.

- Creating 4 social work trainee posts. The postholders have commenced a programme of placements within teams across both Adult and Children's Social Care alongside studying for a social work degree.

- The continued provision of support for staff on the Adult social care worker apprenticeship programme. All 3 apprentices have successfully secured social care jobs with the authority.

- Introducing a Social Services Practitioner Apprenticeship within Children's Social Care.

We supported strength based practice across the Directorate:

- In Adult Social Care managers developed a strengths based, outcomes focussed practice model. The model was launched at events for staff working in our integrated teams and a learning and development plan is being finalised for delivery in 2023-24.

4. How we do what we do

- In Children's Social Care implementation of the Signs of Safety practice framework has begun. Signs of Safety is a relationship and strength-based approach to working with children, young people and their families. It focusses on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and keeps their voices and experiences at the centre of all plans. A programme of training has been developed with delivery from April 2023.

We supported Post qualifying programmes for social work by:

- Continuing to support newly qualified social workers via our First Year in Practice programme.

- Providing mentoring and assessment for social workers within their first three years of post-qualifying practice undertaking the Consolidation Programme via Consortiwm Y De.

- Supporting managers to access the IPC (Oxford Brookes University) Team Manager Development Programme.

How well did we do

- There was a 252% increase in the number of attendees at the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Dementia Care Training and a 107% increase in those going on to become Dementia Champions:

- 153 staff attended the mandatory safeguarding 'Back to Basics - Strengthening Social Work Practice' training programme

- 108 staff registered for and are working towards a health and social qualification at Level 2, 3, 4 or 5.

2021-22

- 241 staff have attended wellbeing workshops and team events.

4. How we do what we do

- 4 staff enrolled on the first cohort of the new Social Services Practitioner Level 4 qualification with five staff allocated places on Cohort 2 commencing in September 2023.
- 11 staff achieved the Training, Assessment and Quality Assurance Award (TAQA).
- Provided 24 Practice Learning Placements for students studying for a degree in social work.
- 6 social workers completed the Consolidation Programme.
- Commenced support for 3 social workers to undertake a practice educator award.
- 4 social work team managers commenced the Team Manager Development Programme.
- Delivered two cohorts of the 3-day ILM endorsed Core Skills for Coaching training course.
- Launched the Directorate Leadership and Management Development Programme with 56 staff in attendance. The programme is being delivered by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) and has been co-produced with the Senior Management Team and an advisory group of managers from across the service and focusses on quality and performance;

Social Care Worker registration with Social Care Wales:

- Working alongside adult residential care home managers we have supported 128 adult residential care home workers to register with Social Care Wales by the required October 22 mandatory registration date.
- Domiciliary care staff have accessed a programme of CPD core courses to ensure they have the required training for their first re-registration with Social Care Wales.

4. How we do what we do

Building a digitally ready workforce

The Workforce Development staff have accessed training to support the delivery of effective virtual learning.

Staff working in Children's Social Care, early years and family support have received training on Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), which involves the use of media to enhance communication within family relationships.

To increase take up of e-learning and improve access to on-line training events we have purchased a number of laptops for use by foster carers. Foster carers have access to on-line safety training via the Training Hub.

To continue our commitment to research in practice, we have renewed our annual subscription to Community Care Inform Adults and Children's and there has been an increase in the number of staff who have activated their account. We have also developed bespoke Bridgend pages on the Community Care Inform websites.

We are upgrading our learning management system package to improve the on-line learning experience for staff (across the sector) enabling us to improve data management and reporting as well as addressing issues of recording e-learning activity and compliance.

4. How we do what we do

What are we doing next

- Increasing opportunities for students at school and further education establishments to access work experience placements within social care.
- Continuing to support the Social Services Practitioner programme and work with the Local Authority Consortium, City and Guilds/WJEC and Further Education Colleges to align the programme to the first year of the social work degree and secure the programme as an exemption from Level 4 of the degree.
- Working with partner Higher Education Establishments on the development of social work degree part-time routes at both undergraduate and post-graduate level.
- Extending the social work traineeship programme and offer a Level 7 Masters Programme.
- Recruiting an additional workforce development officer to support and assess the competence of our hosted student social workers.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future

The increase in the quantum and complexity of work has been evident throughout this report. The level of need for social services and well-being is higher than ever before as evidenced through the CTM RPB Population Needs Assessment. Alongside this increase in need, which many areas of Wales are experiencing post pandemic, exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, there are also significant capacity challenges in respect of workforce and service availability. In Bridgend children's services there has been an exponential increase in contacts which analysis shows us is predictable and we would expect to continue for a number of years following high profile tragedies.

BCBC, alongside other local authorities, and the whole public sector, is operating in a very challenging financial environment. The Welsh Local Government Association has advised Welsh Government that social services – adult and children's services - in Wales was facing a cumulative pressure of cumulative pressure of £407.8m for 2023-24 and 2024-25 to maintain the current level of service provision. Bridgend's proportion of the £407.8m is £18.351m (calculated as 4.5% which is the proportion of WG settlement we receive as an Local Authority).

The net budget for the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate for 2022-23 was £85.387 million and the actual outturn was £96.255 million which following a drawdown of £3.809 million from earmarked reserves (EMRs), resulted in an overspend of £10.868 million.

The over spend has increased since the projected over spend reported at quarter 3 of £9.421 million. This is mainly due to the pressures of work to meet statutory duties against a backdrop of an exponential increase in demand in children's social care and an increase in the number of independent residential placements in Children's Services, pressures in learning disabilities and within older persons residential placements.



Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future

A summary of the main financial pressures are:

- The exponential increase in need for children's social care as evidenced through increasing contacts, increasing numbers of assessments and high numbers of children on the child protection register. To keep the children safe and for the Council to meet statutory duties in respect of safeguarding children, there has been significant engagement of agency workforce to fill vacant posts and over the budgeted establishment– in particular this has placed pressure in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and Information, Advice and Assistance Service, safeguarding localities and the Care Experienced Children's Team and the Children's Social Work Team in children's social care. A sustainability plan is being developed to inform the level of workforce required to sustainably deliver safe services in a way that reduces need for statutory interventions.

- There is also an increasing complexity of need in adults' and children's services with service over spends for key population groups. Bridgend has a growing population and there are more people with statutory care and support needs post the Covid-19 pandemic. Practice continues to be strength based and eligibility criteria rigorously applied. Cost overspends are most evident in learning disability services, mental health services and services for older people. There are increasing numbers of children who require residential accommodation, care and support which is resulting in a significant budget pressure. Some increased complexity can be attributed to the impact of extended Covid lockdowns on physical and mental health, but they also reflect cost pressures in social work teams to prioritise work that maximises independence.



3. PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WE HELP

Adult Social Care

- A reduction in specific grants previously available to social care services has also increased the pressure on core budgets in 2022-23. In 2021-22 significant one-off grant income was received such as the Social Care Recovery Fund (£2.916 million) and the Social Care Pressures Grant (£2.221 million). Whilst the Social Care Recovery Grant primarily funded one-off costs, the combined value of these grants (£5.137 million) supported pressures in 2021-22 and were primarily allocated to the following service areas:- Children's Social Care (£1.886 million), Learning Disabilities (£992,000), Prevention and Wellbeing (£617,000), Mental Health (£454,000) and Older People (£441,000).

In March 2023, as part of the budget setting process Council approved budget pressures of £8.174 million for the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate for 2023-24. This will cover areas such as Real Living Wage (**£2.48 million was WG hypothecated Real Living Wage for care workers**), uplifts on commissioned contracts, demographic pressures, Children's Residential and Independent Residential Care, Learning Disabilities and increased demand and increased costs of commissioned services.

The Directorate has had a selection of EMRs made up of historical reserves and new reserves set up at the end of the 2021-22 financial year, funded from the under spend position. These earmarked reserves totalled £8.870m. These have been put in place to support some of the pressure areas identified above. Key areas supported by the EMRs include the Managed Team costs, the Grow Your Own Social Worker initiative, the Telecare Analogue to Digital migration and Social Work Capacity in the network teams. During 2022-23, £3.809 million of EMRs were drawn down and a further additional EMRs established totalling £1.015 million, leaving £6.076 million of EMRs going forward into the new financial year and beyond.

Sustainable and aligned service and financial plans, which maximise the impact of all services – statutory and non-statutory – to prevent escalation of care needs is critical and a whole Council approach to systematically progressing service reviews and understanding in detail the budgets required is essential. As previously noted a sustainability plan for children and families will be considered by Cabinet, following scrutiny, in the next quarter. A detailed review of practice and commissioning in learning disabilities also will be considered by Cabinet in Autumn 2023.

The end of year annual Social Services and Wellbeing financial summary can be found here in the Council Report outlining the revenue budget outturn for 2022/23:

Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability



The Council has recently published its new 5 year Corporate Plan for 2023-28. The key focus is "Delivering Together" via a one council approach working with key partners to support the best outcomes for people of the borough. As reflected in this plan, partnership and multi-agency working is integral in supporting the delivery of our services.

At a regional level the Directorate works closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, Merthyr County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to form the Regional Partnership Board. The Directorate is also a member of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board who in May 2023 published their 3-year Strategic Plan setting out safeguarding priorities for the region.

At a local level several of our services are co-located with key agencies. Bridgend Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH) is co-located with agencies including South Wales Police, social landlords and the third sector to provide a collaborative approach to safeguarding across the borough. Our Integrated Cluster Network Teams work with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board delivering services to people within the community and our Prevention and Wellbeing Service works with third sector partners, AWEN and HALO in the delivery of leisure, cultural and wellbeing services.
The Directorate works in partnership with Edge of Care services who form part of the Council's Family Support continuum to support family resilience via an early intervention and prevention model. Over the year, the service has worked successfully with a number of families, children, and young people to prevent them from becoming care experienced. During the year Edge of Care services prevented 91.8% of children becoming looked after. Key priorities for the service during 2023-24 include:

Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

- The development of a regional bid for a systemic family therapist / conflict resolution model to be embedded within EOC services. The model will respond to increasing demand of children who are at risk of harm as a result of parental or familial conflict.
- The development of a more robust quality assurance framework to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the service as well as monitoring outcomes.
- Recruit to 3 vacancies within service to respond to increased demand

Our Cabinet Member also sits on the Social Services and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny committee and is chair of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meet 4 times a year to examine our decisions and developments making recommendations on future delivery of our services. The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting meets on a quarterly basis and is responsible for making important policy decisions on service provision for care experienced children and care leavers.

The Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing is a member of the Council's weekly Cabinet Corporate Management Board and fortnightly Cabinet and Corporate Management Board. Corporate Leaders have further oversight of the Directorate's progress and performance against each of the Council's key objectives via the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA). These meetings and reporting mechanisms ensure robust corporate leadership and a clear link between the Directorate's strategic and operational priorities and the Council's overall objectives,

We monitor key performance and management information of all 3 service areas on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis at team, service and directorate level. This provides the Corporate Director and Heads of Service with managerial oversight ensuring we are on-track to achieving not only Directorate priorities but also Corporate and Regional priorities.

Links to all 2022/23 Cabinet, Council, Corporate Parenting and Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports and minutes that relate to social care can be accessed here.