

Meeting of:	SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2
Date of Meeting:	15 APRIL 2024
Report Title:	A 3 YEAR SUSTAINABILITY PLAN TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES IN BRIDGEND YEAR 1 REPORT ON PROGRESS - 2023/24
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	ANNETTE PARKES BUSINESS CHANGE PROGRAMME MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules
Executive Summary:	The 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for children and families in Bridgend was approved by Council in September 2023. This report outlines progress against milestones and actions within the plan for improvement in Children’s Social Care Services within Bridgend County Borough Council between September 2023 and March 2024.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on service progress against milestones identified for improvement within the 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for Children and Family Services in Bridgend at the end of Year 1; September 2023 to March 2024. The Year 1 Action Plan is found at **Appendix 1**.

2. Background

- 2.1 Although the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement check, which took place in November 2022, recognised progress since the ‘serious concerns’ that were identified in the Performance Evaluation Inspection undertaken in May 2022, it was

clear that services for children and families continued to require improvement to be sustainable and achieve better outcomes for children and families.

2.2 The analysis undertaken by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) which was included in the Sustainable Children's Services Analysis Report, in May 2023, identified that a number of things needed to change for sustainable improvement including:

- Sufficiency of workforce.
- A changed operating model between prevention (early help) and statutory services which provides an integrated service in which more children and families with complexity of need are supported preventatively where families are motivated and consent to change.
- Continued focus on implementing the Signs of Safety and Wellbeing model of practice.
- Commissioning the right quantum and quality of service.
- Enhanced working in partnership with professionals and partners and co-productively with children and families

2.3 Therefore, the 3-year sustainability plan sets out a sustainable future operating model for Children's Social Care in Bridgend, which is based on:

- A realistic assessment of the staffing capacity and associated financial investment required to meet demand to the required standards.
- Lessons learnt from a strong evidence base, experience and best practice elsewhere in terms of the Council-wide service, workforce and financial strategy to best improve outcomes for children and families in a way which reduces the need for statutory intervention.

2.4 The 3-year sustainability plan is the Council's response to the expert analysis on how Bridgend achieves sustainable improvement in outcomes for children and families. The action plan is split into 7 overarching themes. Each theme has a number of objectives and associated actions with timescales attached.

3. Current situation/ proposal

3.1 The Action Plan for Year 1, September 2023 – March 2024, is split into the following key themes:

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

3.2 Each theme identifies a number of key actions for Year 1 of the plan. The Action Plan identifies key progress to date, and the associated Red, Amber, Yellow, Green (RAYG) status.

- 3.3 A number of key metrics are included in the Action Plan associated with the relevant theme. Further metrics are also being developed for Year 2.
- 3.4 The Year 1 Action Plan includes those actions that were identified for immediate progress within Year 1. These were identified specifically in response to the inspection activity that had already taken place and the likely future monitoring of progress by CIW.
- 3.5 Many of the areas identified in Year 1 are also included in the 2 subsequent years of the plan for further action and work to embed and make the sustainable long-term changes required within the service.
- 3.6 A number of actions have been completed, and milestones have been met. However, although significant work and progress has been made within the service and with key partners including across the regional footprint, a number of areas are still being developed fully, and will be rolled forward into the Year 2 Action Plan for full implementation and to achieve sustained change. These include the following areas:
- Revision of the Children's Services Quality Assurance (QA) framework
 - Development of the updated commissioning strategy for family support services
 - Full implementation and delivery of the 'Signs of Safety' Programme across the service together with the agreed future training plan for this model of practice.
 - Review and development of the delivery plan for the early help and family support services, (IAA) information advice and assistance, locality social work, and early intervention, and a single point of contact
 - Work with regional partners to ensure sufficient quantity and quality of provision for children whose needs cannot be met in standard residential or fostering provision
 - Work with Foster Wales to recruit enough foster carers within the local authority
 - Work jointly with partners to deliver the priorities in this plan

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

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

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

- 5.1 A summary of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment is listed below:

Involvement	There has been detailed engagement in the development of this plan from key stakeholders including children and families, workforce, Welsh Government and partners.
Long term	The plan sets out to identify the long-term structures and plans for children and families over a 3 year period.
Prevention	To prevent challenges and issues that have arisen in Children's Social Care (CSC) over recent years and provide greater safeguarding and support to children and young people across Bridgend County Borough.
Integration	The plan sets out more integrated support arrangements for children and families with a range of partners who work to support children and families in Bridgend.
Collaboration	The plan identifies areas where improvements to working collaboratively with a range of partners and working regionally can benefit the lives of children and families within Bridgend County Borough.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is no impact or link to Bridgend County Borough Council's climate change aspirations as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 This 3-year sustainability plan outlines and proposes changes, reflecting expert advice, which are required to maintain our statutory safeguarding accountabilities. Implementation of the plan will ensure effective safeguarding arrangements and support the wellbeing of care experienced children (CEC) for whom the Council is corporate parent. The elements of the plan are based on a robust evidence base of what works in safeguarding, protecting, and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for Children and Family Services in Bridgend was approved by Council on 20th September 2023, with a budget virement of £1 million approved for Children's Services and the additional use of up to £2.5 million of earmarked reserves whilst a more permanent funding solution was sought.
- 8.2 Council approved £2.5 million as the balance of the £3.5 million budget pressure on the 28th February 2024 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28, £2 million for Social Services and Well-being and £500k for Education and Family Support.
- 8.3 The funding will be used to address the level of resourcing for the children's services workforce and enhancement of early help as outlined in the IPC report, following a review of service provision and demand, and is required to strengthen the Council's statutory safeguarding accountabilities. The permanent budget pressure will replace the temporary earmarked reserve funding previously allocated.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 The Committee is requested to note and make comment on the progress made by Children's Social Care Services against the milestones identified in the Year 1 Action Plan.

Background documents

None