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| <b>Meeting of:</b>                                   | <b>COUNCIL</b>   |
| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>                              | <b>25 SEPTEMBER 2024</b>   |
| <b>Report Title:</b>                                 | <b>SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24</b>   |
| <b>Report Owner /<br/>Corporate Director:</b>        | <b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND<br/>WELLBEING</b>  |
| <b>Responsible<br/>Officer:</b>                      | <b>DEBBIE MORGAN<br/>GROUP MANAGER, BUSINESS STRATEGY,<br/>PERFORMANCE &amp; IMPROVEMENT</b>   |
| <b>Policy Framework<br/>and Procedure<br/>Rules:</b> | <b>There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure<br/>rules.</b>  |
| <b>Executive<br/>Summary:</b>                        | <p><b>The Director of Social Services Annual Report 2023/24 is a statutory requirement providing the Council, the people of Bridgend, regulators and key partners with an overview of the effectiveness of Social Services and Wellbeing in the county borough in the last year. The report requires the statutory Director of Social Services to exercise their legal duty to advise on quality, performance, workforce, risks, priorities and resources required.</b></p> <p><b>The report reflects on 2023/24, highlighting key achievements and challenges whilst outlining key priorities for 2024/25. In line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, performance is reported against six quality standards evidencing how we have performed against these standards.</b></p> <p><b>Engagement and consultation are a key aspect of the report and how we undertake these activities so an overview of feedback is included. The report also notes how feedback links to our key actions.</b></p> <p><b>A summary of key regulatory activity undertaken in the year is included in the report and focuses on inspections of regulated services across residential and domiciliary care, Foster Wales Bridgend and the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements in Bridgend.</b></p> <p><b>The report also outlines how we support our workforce and notes key partnership arrangements both within the Council,</b></p> |

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|  | <p><b>as well as with partner agencies and third sector organisations.</b></p> <p><b>The report highlights our financial resources noting the key challenges and pressures that the directorate and the Council face in order to deliver statutory services.</b></p> <p><b>The report sets out the key risks to effective social services and wellbeing delivery in light of the growing population, the complexity of needs of individuals, the cost pressures in social care provision, significant changes such as the need to secure a new case management system and the financial position of the Council.</b></p> |
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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Director of Social Services' Annual Report for 2023/24 and request that Members endorse the report, the analysis therein of the strengths and areas for improvement in Social Services and Wellbeing and the next steps set out.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Following the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), Welsh Government developed a performance framework which aimed to ensure authorities report on and evaluate performance against, the well-being outcomes of the SSWBA. The overarching objective of the SSWBA is to improve the well-being outcomes for people who need care and support.

The Act seeks to do this by:

- transforming the way in which social services are delivered, primarily through promoting people's independence and giving them a stronger voice and control;
  - promoting partnership working in social care; and
  - enhancing the preventative role of social care and health, setting out overarching well-being duties to reduce or delay the need for care and support.
- 2.2 The performance framework provides the foundations of the Council's duty to appoint a statutory Director of Social Services who must report annually to Council on the effectiveness of social services and well-being in the authority area.
- 2.3 The methodology for the format of the Annual Report is prescribed under the Code of Practice issued under the SSWBA, to measure social services' performance setting standards which must be reported on. These standards, in turn, reflect the national outcomes framework. The approach to inspection, engagement and performance review is similarly focused on outcomes, with an emphasis on engaging with people to learn about their experiences and listen to their views.

2.4 The draft report was presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The report was well received, with discussions mainly focusing on future developments and budgetary pressures.

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

3.1 The SSWBA, places strong emphasis on promoting the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. It is important the views and voices of people and their carers are heard.

3.2 The aim of the Annual Report (**Appendix 1**) is to provide the Council and people living in Bridgend County Borough with an overview of the effectiveness of social services and wellbeing. It aims to highlight the progress made over 2023/24, being clear about strengths as well as areas for improvement, and identify priorities for 2024/25. It is clear about the risks to social services and wellbeing which are particularly escalated in the context of the financial position of the Council, the growing population of the county borough, legislative and system changes, levels of need for services and inflationary pressures in in-house and commissioned services.

3.3 The preparation of the report involved an analysis, based on evidence of effectiveness. Workforce across the services have contributed to the development of this report and there is evidence within the report of feedback from people who use social services together with feedback from third sector partners.

3.4 The guidance for the report sets out the sections in relation to the six national quality standards for well-being:

1. working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people want to achieve;
2. working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being;
3. taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm;
4. encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society;
5. supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships;
6. working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, to have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

3.5 The report provides a summary of the main achievements in 2023/24 considering the challenges faced and also highlights the priorities for the directorate in 2024/25. The analysis draws on progress against the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate business plan, performance data for each service area in Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services, the views of Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as the regulatory and inspection body for social services and social care in Wales and feedback from people who have experienced social services and well-being and their carers.

3.6 The report evidences key service developments and improvements made during 2023/24 whilst recognising those areas where improvements and change are

required. The report also identifies the significant risks and challenges faced as the Council moves forward. This information has informed our key priorities for 2024/25.

- 3.7 This report acknowledges the support of the whole Council, our partners in Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO), Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) and other statutory partners, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, our cultural and leisure partners - Halo and Awen, and the whole social care sector. It pays tribute to the exceptional commitment to the most vulnerable people in society of the social care, prevention and well-being and the professionalism and commitment of the workforce.

### **Inspection of Local Authority Social Services**

- 3.8 In June 2023, CIW, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and Estyn undertook a Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in Bridgend. The inspection highlighted a number of areas of positive practice and a multi-agency action plan was agreed in September 2023 to focus on the key areas for improvement. Within Social Services and Wellbeing this plan is overseen by the Social Services Improvement Board and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (RSB).
- 3.9 In November 2023, CIW undertook an inspection of Foster Wales Bridgend which comprises of the General Fostering and Placement Team and the Kinship and Permanence Team. The inspection, whilst noting a number of key strengths, did acknowledge the context within which the service was operating; "*the number of children who are referred to the service, outnumbers foster carers available*". There were 8 areas identified for improvement which can be categorised into 4 areas: matching of children with complex needs, safe care arrangements, timeliness of responses to allegations and improvements to systems to ensure policies and procedures are evidenced in practice.
- 3.10 Throughout the year, CIW also undertook 8 inspections of regulated residential and domiciliary services across the directorate. Within Adult Social Care, 5 inspections were held in residential services and domiciliary care services with 3 inspections within Children and Family residential services. All 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 and for residential-based services, the environment.
- 3.11 Examples of good practice, strengths and areas for improvement identified via these inspections are summarised in section 2, 'How People are Shaping Our Services' of the report.

### **Priorities for 2024/25**

- 3.12 The priorities consist of Council wide priorities and those specifically for Adult Social Care, Children and Family Services, and Prevention and Wellbeing. The directorate will implement the actions as set out in the 2024/25 Social Services and Wellbeing directorate business plan. Service area priorities are noted below.

## **Adult Social Care**

The key priorities for 2024/25 are to:

- embed the changes to our adult social care operating model;
- ensure the whole Council and partners are delivering on our commitment to outcomes-focused strengths-based practice which will help us promote resilience and independence for the people we support;
- drive through further improvements in our front door response, hospital discharge, reablement and long-term support in the community to ensure that our services are most effective in promoting resilience and reducing unnecessary demand;
- secure transformation and greater cost-effectiveness through our plans for learning disability, mental health and long-term conditions services;
- ensure support for staff, community engagement, technology and partnerships are all geared towards cost-effective and sustainable social care in the longer term.

## **Children and Family Services**

The key priorities for 2024/25 are:

- continued delivery of the 'Signs of Safety' Programme together with an agreed future training plan for this model of practice;
- the implementation of an operating model between prevention (early help) and statutory services to provide an integrated service in which more children and families with complexity of need are supported preventatively where families are motivated and consent to change;
- improvements in the sufficiency, quantity and quality of provision for care experienced children requiring residential care;
- work with Foster Wales to recruit enough foster carers within the local authority, enhancing foster carer support;
- work jointly with key partners to deliver the priorities laid out in the three-year plan;
- the enhancement of partnership working with key professionals and partners as well as co-production with children and families;
- the development of an updated commissioning strategy for family support services;
- the revision of the Quality Assurance framework.

## **Prevention & Wellbeing**

The key priorities for 2024/25 are to:

- further develop the active Bridgend plan and engage communities and stakeholders in determining future priorities;
- develop a strategic plan, with external support for community hubs, libraries and cultural services including; the potential role that community hub approaches could play;
- to support people to remain resilient within their communities via cross sector working and maximising the impact of local community co-ordinators and community navigators;

- support unpaid carers including young carers and young adult carers to access community based support and manage their own wellbeing;
- work with colleagues across the Council and partners to develop more pathways to education, training and employment for people who experience the most significant barriers to work;
- review our approach to community connection to ensure we are maximising impact for people most at risk of needing statutory services.

3.13 Additional 2024/25 service specific priorities for each of the 6 quality standards are noted in sections 3 to 5 of the Annual Report.

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

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

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

5.1 Within Bridgend, the implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the SSWBA, supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the well-being goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

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

- **Long Term:** Social Services is demand led and the SSWBA focusses on sustainable prevention and well-being outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, due to increased contacts, rising demographics and increasing complexity, the continued improvement and transformation of services remains a priority. To support this, the remits of our long term and specialist teams within Adult Social Care have been widened to ensure the model supports people well with long term and complex disabilities and ill health.
- **Prevention:** The report highlights developments by the directorate in line with the SSWBA. For example, the Edge of Care and Early Help Screening teams joined our new Children and Families Division on 1st April 2024 to work towards a single front door for children and families in Bridgend. Within Adult Social Care our

integrated community services developed a focused approach on working to support adults with complex needs and those at risk of hospital admission.

- **Integration:** The implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. Key examples of integration include our Prevention and Wellbeing Service who work with third sector partners HALO and AWEN to deliver cultural, leisure and wellbeing services across the borough and the new operating model within Adult Social Care, supports integration with health and the recognition given toward areas of expertise and specialism.
- **Collaboration:** The collaborative approaches noted in the report, are managed and monitored through various regional collaborative boards. These include the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTMSB). Working regionally enables the directorate to strategically plan and deliver local services by optimising available resources. At a local level, the 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 and our Integrated Network Cluster Teams work with CTMUHB in the delivery of services.
- **Involvement:** Our key stakeholders are the people who use our services, and it is important their voice is heard and acted upon. During the year we have undertaken engagement and consultation activity via a number of channels including surveys, stakeholder meetings, focus groups, feedback forms and the social services complaints and compliments process.

5.3 It is important to note that the priorities outlined within the Annual Report are reflected within the Adult Social Care and Children and Family strategic plans as well as the directorate's business plan and are aligned to the appropriate Corporate Wellbeing objectives.

## 6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 Social Services and Wellbeing are part of the Council's response to the climate emergency and have progressed specific projects at reducing carbon emissions in 2023/24 in line with the Welsh Government's route map to 2030 for social care in Wales. These include the use of electric vehicles in the care and support at home service.

## 7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

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

7.2 Actions are noted under quality standard 3, "Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm". Examples include:

- working with key partners to implement the integrated safeguarding GOSS system to enhance the sharing of safeguarding information;

- continuing to ensure that learning from child practice reviews and other in-depth analysis is systematically embedded. Examples include the publication of 7-minute briefings and targeted workshops with child practice reviews referenced in core safeguarding training

### 7.3 Safeguarding priorities for 2024/25 include:

- having a strong and effective shared approach to adult safeguarding understood and implemented by agencies and practitioners across Bridgend;
- agreeing and implementing a single programme of shared priorities with partners for children in the County Borough;
- working with the third sector and in line with safeguarding considerations of the Bridgend County Borough Council volunteering policy to grow community based support.

7.4 As the Corporate Parent for all care experienced children and young people, the launch of the co-produced Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy led by the Youth Voice Forum of care experienced children and young people, ensures we engage and listen to continue to support and improve outcomes for these individuals.

## 8. Financial Implications

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

8.2 The report highlights the significant issues in respect of the directorate's budget to meet the need for social care services in Bridgend. Although the directorate was able to drawdown £5.660 million from earmarked reserves the financial position at year-end 2023/24 was an over spend of £11.827 million.

8.3 The Annual Report highlights the key areas of over spend which have arisen as a consequence of:

- significant increases in the cost of services due to wage and other inflationary factors;
- a continued exponential increase in demand in Children's social care which impacts on the workforce required;
- a further increase in the number of independent residential placements in Children and Family Services;
- pressures in learning disabilities, mental health, physical disabilities and older people's services driven by increase in cost, volume of people supported and levels of need.

8.4 Pressures funded in the 2024/25 budget approved by Council do not cover all areas of underlying pressures and remain a highly significant risk. Whilst a significant transformation program is underway across the directorate to fundamentally change



operating models, practice and commissioning in light of this financial context, we will be required to closely monitor the budget given the level of demand, high cost of services and reduction in specific grants which have previously, for many years, underpinned the budget. The Annual Report highlights the 3 year sustainability plan for children and families and highlights that an aligned plan for adult social care will be presented to Cabinet in 2024/25.

- 8.5 It is important to note that whilst the Council remained committed to meeting statutory duties in social care, the costs of so doing outweighed the finances available in service budgets in 2023/24 and the cost of social services and wellbeing is causing huge challenge in determining how to balance statutory duties in 2024/25.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Council endorse the 2023/24 Director of Social Services Annual Report.

## **Background documents**

None