

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

**SOCIAL
SERVICES AND
WELLBEING
DIRECTORATE**

**Director of Social
Services
Annual Report**

2023-24

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1. Director's Overview

Director's Analysis

This is my fourth 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 as Bridgend County Borough Council we have exercised our functions, our performance during the year, and developments and action taken to further improve our services and support.

Our social services and wellbeing workforce have gone above and beyond in this last year to make life better for the most vulnerable citizens in our county borough. This report starts with a heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them. They have risen to every challenge. We have continued to experience exponential increases in the numbers of people contacting parts of our services. High levels of contacts have continued into children's social care and safeguarding in children and adult services. Some partners have changed the way they work which has contributed to a higher level of referrals needing to be screened and managed by the Council as the safeguarding authority.

Our workforce has been part of significant change programmes, embracing new models of social work practice in children's and adults social care and new operating models across the service. They have welcomed new colleagues, including international recruits who have moved long distances to be part of our social services and wellbeing family in Bridgend. We have focussed on getting our culture – how we do things around here – right. The whole workforce is focussed on 'doing the right thing' for the people we support which is inevitably the most cost-effective course of action. We are committed to continuous improvement, using data and evidence – including people's experience of working with us – to develop and progress to be the best social services and wellbeing service we can be within the resources available to us. Celebrating what is going well, and being open and transparent to support improved practice were this is needed is at the heart of our culture.

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Despite this context, in many areas our quantitative performance has been good or excellent. We have seen improvements in other areas where we needed to be better. We have significantly improved management oversight of practice and are sighted on those areas where performance is not as good as we would like it to be and have clear plans to support improvement. We have strengthened our quality assurance, performance management and continuous improvement mechanisms. We also celebrate many successes. Some areas – such as our prevention and wellbeing preventative services - which have flexed and adapted to support the most vulnerable – are sector leading. With our partners in Halo we have received an excellent accreditation ranking for our leisure services. Our multi-disciplinary integrated community teams in adult services bring together 9 different health and care professions to seamlessly support people with long-term health and care needs. Our children and family services performance in many areas is in the top quartile in Wales. There has been significant improvement in the last 2 years which is due to the dedication of front-line workers and managers.

There are areas where we need to continue to improve and it is important there is a strong evidence base, good governance and systematic approach to progressing continuous improvement. At a leadership level we have a Social Services Improvement Board (SSIB) chaired by the Leader of the Council, which oversees service and financial performance. During 2023/24 this board was advised by an independent expert who provided effective scrutiny and advice to the Council on how to achieve sustainable children and adult services in the context of the improvements required by regulators, high levels of need in terms of both volume and complexity, high levels of statutory interventions and financial challenges:

‘Quantitative performance is remarkable in light of exponential increase in demand. Inevitably there can be an impact on quality when the volumes are so elevated.’

Director's Overview

Children and Family Services

In September 2023, Cabinet and Council approved a 3-year strategic plan for children and families in Bridgend: 'Think Family - Improving Outcomes for Children and Families in Bridgend'. This plan had been developed to support the improvements needed for Bridgend to move from adequate to good, then excellent in its support for vulnerable children and families, following the rapid improvements required at pace by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in their inspection carried out in May 2022 when they expressed their serious concerns with regard to Bridgend children's services. A Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA), undertaken by CIW, Estyn, Health Inspectorate Wales and His Majesty's Inspectors of Police and Fire Services in June 2023, noted overall, systems and relationships are in place to facilitate effective partnership working where a child is at risk of abuse and neglect, led by the Council as the safeguarding authority. Ongoing challenges were highlighted, in the context of the levels of contact into statutory services, particularly in relation to securing and retaining a permanent workforce which resulted in turnover of agency social workers and resulting variability in the quality of practice. There is a multi-agency action plan to progress recommendations for improvement overseen by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTM RSB). The evidence within the JICPA, alongside in-depth independent analysis from the Institute of Public Care (IPC), expert advice from the independent improvement advisor, and internal analysis has informed the priorities within the 3-year strategic plan which are:

1. Hearing and acting on the voice of the children and families
2. Securing a stable, well-supported, motivated and permanent workforce
3. Improving practice
4. Maximising the impact of our services and interventions
5. A more effective response to families with complex needs
6. Seamless working with partners
7. Better intelligence and information system

Director's Overview

Good progress has been made in the second half of 2023/24 as evidenced in a stocktake of the first 6 months reported in April 2024.

Examples of progress in line with the priorities are:

1. The launch of the co-produced Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy led by the Youth Voice Forum of care-experienced children and young people.
2. Improvements in retention and recruitment of children's social workers including the successful recruitment and positive impact of our cohort of international social workers.
3. The first phase embedding of 'Signs of Safety' as the model of social work practice with 178 colleagues receiving training.
4. Opening our children's residential assessment home, providing therapeutic emergency and short-term care and support for up to 7 children and young people.
5. A steady but safe reduction in the numbers of children who are on the Child Protection Register and the number of care experienced children.
6. Seamless partnership working with police, health and other agencies in our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
7. Successful implementation of the GOSS system to support multi-agency information sharing.

The 3-year strategic plan will continue to provide an improvement framework for Children and Family services in Bridgend in 2024/25.

The key areas of focus are:

Director's Overview

1. Improving the engagement and involvement of parents and improving uptake of advocacy.
2. Continuing to significantly improve retention and recruitment of Children's social workers and children's social care workers through effective workforce planning.
3. Continued embedding of Signs of Safety, supporting workforce confidence in the tools they have been trained in and partner commitment to the model.
4. Progressing business cases for children's residential homes and improving in-house fostering to ensure we are well placed for the elimination of profit from children's Social Care.
5. Rebalance of early help support for families so more children are supported to live with their parents without the need to be come care experienced.
6. Build on the strengths of multi-agency working through joint screening of referrals and quality assurance of outcomes for children.
7. Procurement of a new, fit for purpose, case management IT system.

Director's Overview

Adult Social Care

Performance in many parts of adult services has been good in 2023/24. There have been no CIW local authority inspections in the last year, but the engagement activity in the integrated dementia day service highlighted a well-run service which is having a highly positive impact on the lives of the people who attend and their carers. Regulatory inspections of registered care homes and domiciliary care service provided by the Council have been highly positive. It is particularly pleasing how person centred the care and support provided is. Need for improvements have been identified in some areas such as ensuring timely social work assessments, improving timescales for domiciliary care, continuing to improve the interface between hospital and community services and implementing more progressive practice in learning disabilities. Our understanding of what needs to change in these areas has driven the areas of focused work described below.

In adult social care, we have progressed the implementation of our new model of strength based, outcome focussed social work practice. The practice model is based on 10 principles which provide the framework for practice, which is person centred, understands the strengths and resources available to meet an individual's needs, and supports people to live their best life as independently as possible. Throughout the year we have strengthened our quality assurance mechanisms through outcome panels and surgeries involving senior professionals to really support the embedding of this way of working which is delivering improved outcomes more cost effectively.

Strength based working has been key to the service priority to transform the way we support people with learning disabilities to live their best lives. The covid pandemic meant significant change for the way all of us lived and for people with learning disabilities the restrictions meant a greater emphasis on having their outcomes met through commissioned care and support. The learning disabilities -transformation programme has progression at its heart, supporting people to access their

Director's Overview

community, meaningful daytime occupation and to live as independently as possible in their own homes. Outcome focussed assessors have been working with individuals to understand what matters to them and reviewing care and support arrangements to ensure they reflect the model of practice and maximise independence in the post-pandemic world.

2023/24 also saw the conclusion of a significant piece of work to review and modernise the social work operating model in adult social care. This new operating model aims to ensure people get the right support at the right time, be that early intervention and prevention or more specialised long-term support. The model builds on the successful integrated multi-disciplinary teams, with people with long term physical disabilities now benefitting from the seamless integrated working of social workers and health professionals. The new model was implemented from February 2024 and its success will be evaluated in 2024/25.

A 3 year strategic plan for adult social care is being developed and will be considered by Cabinet in the Autumn of 2024. The plan sets the transformation priorities for the next 3 years which are:

1. Manage demand through the front door of the Council – to handle and resolve initial enquiries more effectively.
2. Work with partners to manage demand from acute hospitals – supporting people to recover and regain skills and minimising poor discharges which result in unnecessary care and returns to hospital.
3. Increase the number and range of effective short-term interventions for people in the community – short term help to reduce or eliminate the need for longer term solutions.
4. Promote asset-based community and targeted preventative support to help people live well in thriving and supportive communities.

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5. Work with partners to redesign care and support for people with long term needs - help people with long-term conditions to gain opportunities for greater independence in the longer term.

Prevention and Wellbeing

The prevention and well-being offer in Bridgend has continued to be leading edge in supporting the most vulnerable citizens of the county borough to be healthy, well and connected in 2023/24. Our approach is to recognise that people are experts in their own lives and 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:

1. Local community connectors who now work with people across the county borough to support them to make meaningful connections and live well in their own communities, developing new community activities such as bushcraft where these don't currently exist.
2. The carer's wellbeing service which has provided information, advice and assistance to 1249 carers in 2023/24.
3. The young carers networks which are engaging over 150 young carers in 'we are valued' days.
4. Accredited training and supporting for people with meaningful occupation in Awen's Wood-b and B-leaf supported employment.
5. Halo leisure trust have supported autism friendly swimming and the feel good for life programme for those living with dementia, lonely, isolated and their carers.
6. Our active young people's programme which engages children of different ages in sports, games, arts and creative activities.

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7. Our Bevan exemplar super agers programme which keeps us fit, active and socially connected as we grow older.

Our Most Significant Risks and Issues

Risk management is essential in all public services, and it is no different in social services and well-being services that support our most vulnerable citizens. The risks outlined below are reflected in corporate and directorate risk registers. An open transparent culture and practice, identifying managing and mitigating risks, is fundamental in supporting continual improvement. The Council continues to manage a number of inter-related risks and challenges in respect of social services and wellbeing.

1. Financial Risks

Public finances continue to be exceptionally challenging. The most recent forecasts from the Wales Fiscal Centre suggest that the next four years will be as challenging as the past period has been. The Council's ability to fund social services and wellbeing at the necessary level to meet all statutory duties will continue to be difficult when set alongside all the other pressures that exist within the local authority's remit. Adjusted for inflation, spend on social services (and education) has risen in recent years. As a result, these two services represent a significant share of local councils' budgets. Conversely, spend on most other services, many of which can reduce the need for statutory interventions, has reduced. Analysis by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) shows that in 2009/10, Education and Social Services accounted for 65p of every £1 local councils spent. By 2020/21, this had increased to 74p of every £1 spent.

The Code of Practice for Part 8 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act requires that 'as a member of the corporate management team, a director of social services may be required to

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consider overall resource implications, including budgetary issues. The head of paid service and the director of social services have a responsibility to ensure councillors have clear advice on the level of resources required for a local authority to effectively deliver its social services functions'. It is clear that the Council has, in light of robust analysis and professional advice, supported pressures in Social Services as far as it has been able in the 2023-24 budget, including pay and price increases for commissioned services (£3.36 million), an investment of £2 million in the Children's workforce, £1.970 million in Learning Disability services and £1.0 million in Residential Care for older people. It must be noted that the single most significant area of pressure in Social Services in Bridgend is children's independent residential placements and this is not an area the Council has been able to support, the budget for children's independent residential placements will fund 7 placements, for the last 2 years there have been an average of 20 placements at any time. This pressure will not diminish with the changes required with the Welsh Government policy to eliminate profit from children's social care as set out in their Health and Social Care Bill. The way we provide homes for our most vulnerable children will continue to change with more in-house provision being created.

The WLGA has reported that in 2024-25 local authorities will face an estimated pressure of £809m. In 2025/26 it will be £604m and £612m in 2026/27. In respect of Social Services specifically they report that there is a £261m pressure across Wales which represents an 11.3% increase in current budgets. Commissioning costs, as well as pay and non-pay inflation account for £180m of the pressure. The remainder is down to demand which accounts for £81m. There is an additional pressure of £187m in 2025/26, and £198m in 2026/27 respectively giving a cumulative total of £646m. Pressures of this level to meet essential statutory services represent an unprecedented challenge for Bridgend and local government in Wales. If the Council is not able to afford to meet statutory duties

Director's Overview

to safeguard, assess need, and provide care and support in some cases vulnerable individuals will be at risk of harm. The financial position of the Council is the most significant risk to social services and wellbeing in the county borough.

Given the £11.213 million overspend from Adults and Children's services at the end of 2023/24 a budget recovery plan has been developed which sets out a range of actions which will enable reductions in spend, and avoidance of additional costs, whilst continuing to meet statutory duties in a proportionate way which enables and supports independence. These actions include maximising grant spend, reviewing contracts to ensure best value, safe reduction of agency staff levels, and a focus on rebalancing from high-cost intensive services to more cost-effective solutions which also achieve better outcomes for individuals. Whilst these actions are important and mean the Council has continued to meet all statutory duties, as cost effectively as possible, they are highly unlikely to address all the underlying deficits in service budgets given the level of gap identified by the WLGA.

2. Children's Placement Sufficiency

On the 20th May 2024, the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill was presented to the Senedd. The focus of the bill is eliminating profit from children's social care in Wales which has created some additional instability in the children's social care market, with a number of residential providers electing to withdraw whilst others await further information before committing to become a not-for-profit provider. Local market analysis indicates some providers are on several frameworks and are actively accepting children and young people from local authorities outside of Wales, which is increasing pressure on the supply and demand for quality children's placement providers and adds to pressures on the safeguarding authority. The Council is developing further in-house provision for care experienced children in Bridgend which is more cost effective and supports better outcomes than independent

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provision. These developments are dependent on Regional Partnership Board (RPB) capital funding. There is short term 'eliminating profit' grant funding to support the impact of the new legislation but this is currently due to end in March 2025 which will create a revenue gap.

There is a deficit in the sufficiency of foster care families in the Bridgend fostering service; which given the number of care experienced children heightens risk to the Council in securing suitable care and support for children and adds to the financial risk. The number of children and young people accommodated in independent residential care homes has increased significantly. In 2023/24, there were also a small number of children being placed in settings which are "operating without registration". This is a significant risk as the safeguards of a registered provision are not in place and means risk of prosecution. The financial implications of high-cost placements , registered and operating without registration, is very high.

3. Social worker and care capacity in Adult Services

Whilst there have been reductions in the numbers of people waiting for social worker assessment and care and support provided by the Council and independent sector, capacity issues within the adult social care, in-house short term enabling services have increased the number of people having to wait for their assessed needs to be met. The impact of this is that people are sometimes delayed in hospital or have to rely on family and friends for support which can impede a person's ability to maintain a level of independence. These delays, combined with health delays, can cause problems for the whole health and social care system. The directorate has a key priority to remodel short-term enabling services and increase the proportion of people who are supported to retain or regain their independence prior to commissioning a long term care service.

4. Levels of need for social care services

Within children and family services there is continued significant

Director's Overview

increase in the number of contacts received which places the service at risk of meeting its statutory duties in a timely way and most importantly ensuring children and families are protected. Whilst there have been reductions in the number of assessments and child protection registrations, social work caseloads, number of care experienced children and levels of activity, the number of contacts, and statutory intervention in the lives of children and families, remains relatively high when compared with other local authorities. Integration of preventative early help services and the embedding of strength based practice, through the signs of safety practice model, are key to mitigating this risk.

As the number of people aged 65+, living in the Borough, continues to grow, adult social care and our key partners within the NHS will continue to face challenges in meeting increased demand of services. It is anticipated that a rise in an ageing population will in turn increase the number of people living with dementia which will impact not only on service delivery within the community but could potentially increase the number of high-cost residential placements.

Adult social care has seen a significant increase in the number of hours of support for people with learning disabilities. Within the learning disability service there has been an increase in the number of intensive two to one and one to one support packages being delivered as well as an increase in the number of supported living package of care; with both contributing to an overspend within the service and a risk that people aren't being supported to live as independently as possible. There have been pressure in the social work teams due to court of protection safeguarding work and agency workforce has increased. A transformation programme and outcome surgeries have been established to improve practice and commissioning, with a focus on embedding strength-based practice and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to maximise their independence.

5. Workforce

Despite significant improvements in the last year, the over-reliance

Director's Overview

on agency workforce in children and adults social care remains a significant risk to the directorate. The use of agency workers is not only far more expensive than a permanent workforce but can impact on a person's experience of the service, with more frequent turnover of staff meaning a lack of continuity of care. There are workforce challenges in social work and social care workforce. Strengthened workforce planning, improved retention, innovative recruitment initiatives such as growing our own social workers, apprenticeships and international recruitment and a focus on workforce support, wellbeing and flexibility and innovative recruitment are mitigating this risk.

6. IT System replacement

The Council is facing a number of challenges and risks in relation to the procurement of a replacement system for its current safeguarding and case management IT System. The resources to implement a change of system are not yet in place at the Council level in either the IT department or in the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate. Changing an IT system which contains such sensitive personal data, which will need to be transferred to the new system, is always an inherently risky undertaking. There are significant staff training requirements from any system change. The Council is working with others regionally and nationally to manage and mitigate the significant safeguarding risks presented by this system change.

7. Pressures on partner agencies

Service and financial pressures are impacting all parts of public services and a number of key partners have indicated a 'reset' of their operating models to focus on statutory priorities. This includes the 'right care, right person' reset by the police and a reset from probation services. There is a significant risk this means a greater expectation on local authority social services and wellbeing and gaps in the support available to people from other agencies. Partnership is a strength in Bridgend and there is a real focus on working through changes with partners to ensure

Director's Overview

people continue to access the support they need, whilst being clear what the Council's responsibilities are and the expectations on other partners to fulfil their responsibilities. Partnership works best where there are integrated service arrangements such as the MASH and integrated adult community teams.

Priorities for 2024/25

Strategic plans have been developed for children and families and adults in Bridgend.

Adult Social Care

In Adult Social Care, our aim is to ensure our services are seamless to people, are well co-ordinated; with close professional integration, joint working, and information sharing between services and providers. 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;
- and to ensure support for staff, community engagement, technology and partnerships are all geared towards **cost-effective and sustainable social care** in the longer term.

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Children and Family Services

Within Children and Family Services the aim is 'Working together to enable better outcomes for children, young people and their families via strong relationships, effective practice and timely and responsive services, which support children and families to live together (wherever possible), work on difficulties and safeguard children from harm'. 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** ;
- and the **revision** of the **Quality Assurance (QA) framework**;

Prevention and Wellbeing

The aim of the Prevention and Wellbeing Service is to ensure people are connected to the right community based services and support to prevent their needs escalating to require statutory services. This approach supports longer term sustainability whereby people are able to manage their own wellbeing and resilience within communities where there are local opportunities that can meet many identified needs.

The key priorities for 2024/25 are to:

Director's Overview

- 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;
- and, **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.

Looking to the future – sustainably improving at a time of challenge for public services

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a review of the last year, the progress we have made and the areas where we must still improve further. There is a strong commitment across all the services in social services and wellbeing to work with partners to ensure the very best services and support for our most vulnerable citizens. The demands upon services and the levels of need the teams work with is increasing but through evidence informed practice we can continue to improve and support better outcomes for people, whilst supporting them to be more resilient and live as independently as possible. There are many reasons to be positive about social services and wellbeing in Bridgend. We have seen greater regulatory confidence from CIW in our ability to sustain improved performance. We have improved the stability of

Director's Overview

our workforce. We work well with partner agencies. Our quantitative performance is largely good. We have good business intelligence which tells us where we need to improve and are acting on that intelligence. Most importantly, whilst knowing we have further work to do to grow confidence and consistency, our qualitative review shows us improvements in practice, building on the strengths in people's lives and building our relationships with the people we work with and alongside.

As Statutory Director, I am, however, not complacent about the position of our system. The risks set out in this report are not inconsiderable. The financial risks to the Council are acute and there is a huge challenge in continuing to meet all statutory duties in social care within the resources available. My statutory duty is to advise on what resources are required to do this in the most cost effective and proportionate way which both safeguards the most vulnerable and promotes independence, wellbeing and understanding of people's strengths and resources. Addressing risks requires focussed management and mitigation. We need to continue as a whole Bridgend community approach - one Council and with partners - to ensure in these most challenging of financial times for public services we do not collectively take our eye off the ball of the need to safeguard and support the most vulnerable. Our leadership and management team is stable and our workforce is growing in confidence to deliver excellent social services and wellbeing for our people.

My final word is of sincere thanks; firstly to all Councillors, my colleagues across the Council, in the directorate, across all our partners. Your support and understanding of what is needed to improve social services and wellbeing in Bridgend has been unwavering and the progress within this report could not have been achieved without your leadership, challenge and commitment. The ultimate thanks are to the people of Bridgend with care and support needs - the barriers they overcome, their tenacity and resilience are what, despite the challenges, brings joy to all of us who work in social care.

Diolch o gallon,

Claire Marchant
Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing



July 2024

Summary of Performance

Adult Social Care

Contacts, Assessments & Screening



↓ 4% decrease
5782 contacts received in the year



↑ 2% increase
294 contacts for carers



↑ 13% increase
1850 new assessments completed in the year

24%

↓ 5% decrease in proportion of new assessments progressing to a care and support plan

The overall decrease in the number of contacts received during the year equates to 262 or an average of 22 referrals per month. Whilst there has been an increase in new assessments, the proportion that result in a care and support plan evidences our strength based practice model and commitment to promoting people's independence.

Reablement Services

65

↓ 53% decrease in the number of people awaiting a Community Occupational Therapist Assessment at 31st March

99

↓ 18% decrease in the number of people awaiting a sensory assessment at 31st March

67%

↔ of people who received a reablement service, had no ongoing service needs.

5%

↓ 2% decrease in the percentage of people whose needs increased following a reablement service

14%

↓ 1% decrease in the percentage of people who maintained their level of need following a reablement service

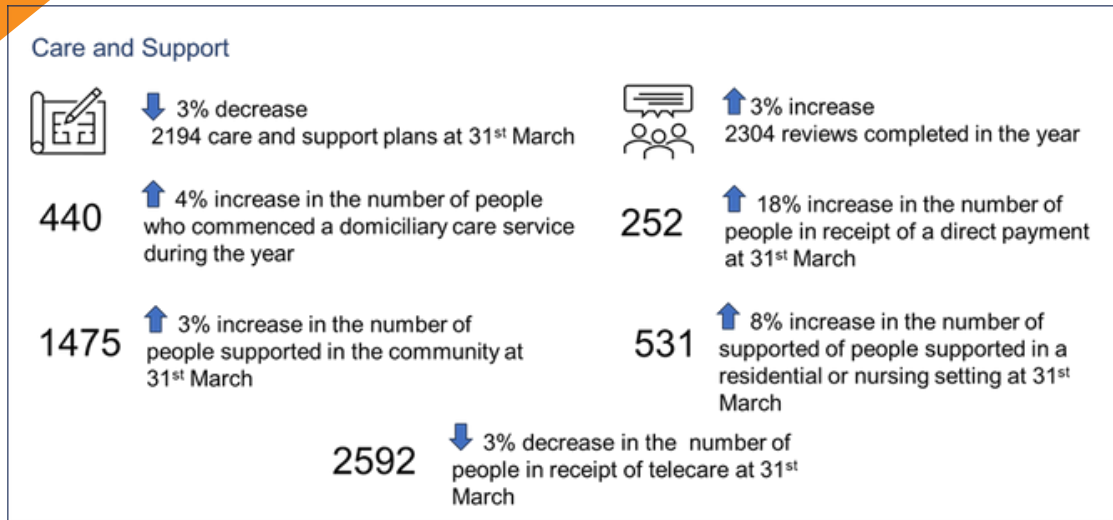
14%

↑ 2% increase in the percentage of people whose needs reduced following a reablement service

The success of preventative services to maximise the opportunity for people to have wellbeing outcomes met through community connection and resources in their community can be evidenced in the reduced level of care and support people require following reablement intervention. Whilst the number of people who maintained their level of care and support is comparable with last year, the overall percentage of people requiring less support has increased. People with additional needs are being referred to reablement which has an impact on the proportion of people whose needs are mitigated but means more people have

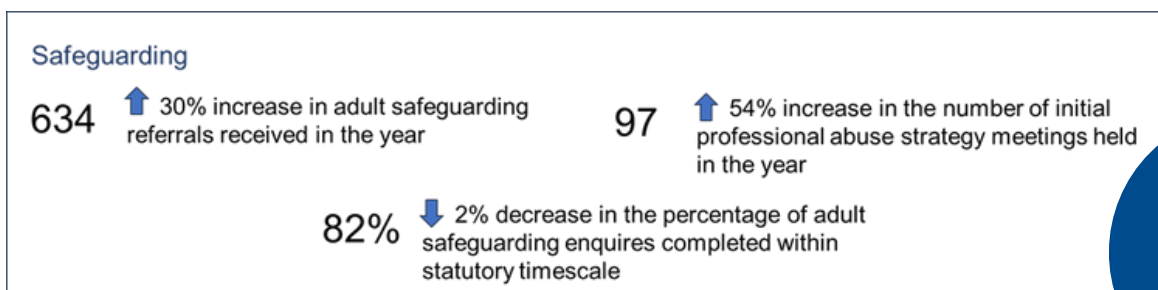
Summary of Performance

their independence maximised.



The small shift in the number of care and support plans and reviews, along with the percentage of people supported within the community or within a residential setting illustrates that despite population increases we are supporting less people overall but those who we do support have greater needs.

Of the total number of people supported at the 31st March 2024, 74% are supported within the community and 26% within a residential or nursing setting, representing a 1% shift to residential care. This shift and the increase in the number of people commencing a domiciliary care service is due to the increasing health and care needs of our population as people are presenting with greater care and support needs. However, by providing support at home we are able to continue to support people in a community setting. Technology such as telecare also plays a key role in promoting people to live independently within their own home. We saw a decrease in the number of people in receipt of telecare as staff focussed on the major task of switching all equipment from analogue to digital services. However, as outlined in section 3, we are taking steps to promote the use of technology to support people at home.

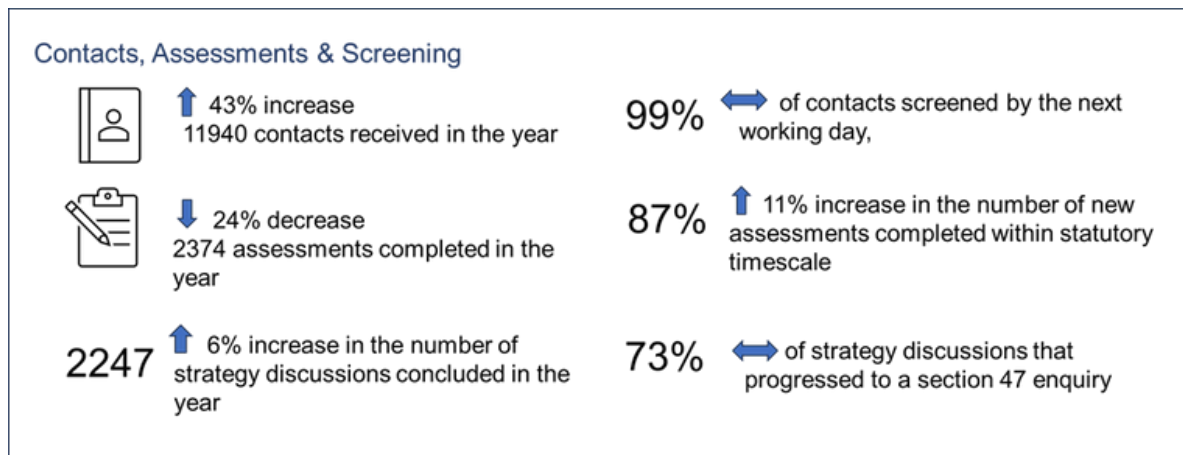


Summary of Performance

There was a decrease in the completion of safeguarding enquiries within statutory timescales which will be an area of focus for 2024-25.

The completion safeguarding enquiries relies on information from partner agencies which cannot always be provided within the statutory timescale. Whilst there has been a dip in performance, the permanent recruitment of a Social Work Team Manager for the Safeguarding and Secure Estates along with the revision of safeguarding processes, provides increased managerial oversight and support for this area to ensure timescales are met.

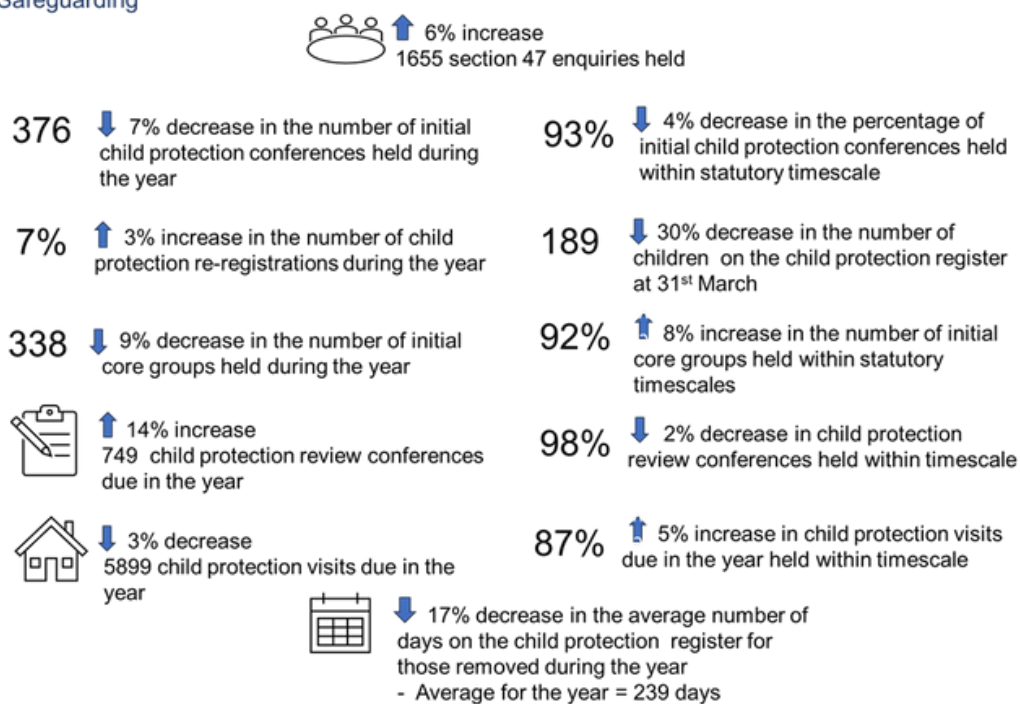
Children and Family Services



Whilst the number of contacts increased significantly, the decrease in those resulting in assessment not only evidences our increased sign-posting to Early Help and preventative services but also demonstrates the number received that do not meet the threshold for our services. The Signs of Safety screening tool is assisting us in clearer decision making and along with further enquiries at the front door has strengthened the direction of work. We continue to work with partner agencies to improve understanding of what is an appropriate referral .

Summary of Performance

Safeguarding



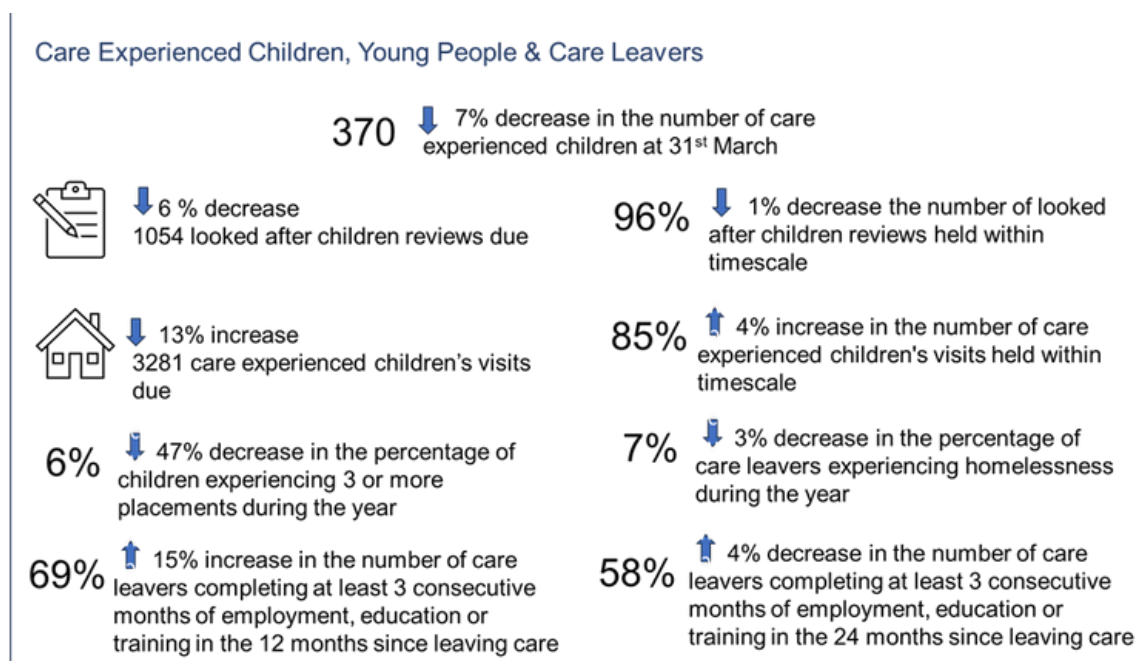
Over the last year we have further strengthened our awareness and recognition of child protection concerns. Our screening is more thorough and considers the history, there is greater professional awareness for partner agencies in their recognition of risk, and improved management oversight in the MASH/IAA Service. Whilst this robust process will increase the number of section 47 enquires, risks are fully considered with appropriate safeguarding actions being implemented.

To improve the timeliness of initial child protection and review conferences, processes have been reviewed to understand the reasons for non-compliance and targeted work has commenced. A number of non-compliance cases were as a result of Social Workers not sharing conference reports in good time. The Group Manager for IAA and Safeguarding has sent a recent request to all Safeguarding Hub Team Managers to monitor conferences closely to ensure this only takes place in exceptional circumstances. We have also recruited a permanent Independent Reviewing Officer Team Manager and one of their priorities is to improve this performance.

The re-registration of children equates to a small number, (22 out of 328) when compared to other local authority areas in our RSB region. We will continue to monitor this figure to ensure when we cease involvement with a family, we do so when they are in the best position to succeed and have a support network to give the best

Summary of Performance

chance of not reverting to harmful behaviours. Targeted work continues within our locality safeguarding hubs to close care and support cases open to statutory services for an extended period of time without the need. This work has resulted in a reduction of cases and social worker caseloads consistently remain at a safe level. This allows practitioners to focus their time on those children and families who require it, with the right intervention at the right time and timely reviewing of plans. The Signs of Safety model has supported decision making in child protection conferences, and will support practitioners to evidence positive change more clearly which will support more thorough decision making and further reduce registration numbers.



Over the last year, we have implemented a number of actions to focus on the safe reduction of care experienced children. Care experienced reduction meetings have had a clear focus and fed into care order discharge (COD) meetings. We have ensured social workers are fully prepared and work is completed to a high standard. The embedding of the Signs of Safety model means there is greater consistency of practice and is supporting families to utilise their own resources to find their own solutions.

The performance of reviews for care experienced children is comparable with 2022/23. Over the year a high number of reviews

Summary of Performance

had to be rescheduled outside of timescale due to reports not being completed by allocated workers. Performance has also been an identified area for improvement in the Care Experienced Children's Team. To improve performance, we have strengthened practice and processes.

Whilst the performance of visits to care experienced children has improved over the year to ensure this trajectory continues a Care Experienced Children's Framework has been drafted and provides practice guidance on visit compliance and recordings. Social Workers are also being provided with protected time to ensure visit recordings are completed and bi-weekly team meetings focus on statutory visits to support compliance by discussing any barriers to completion and providing cover where required.

We have made progress in reducing the number of children who experienced 3 or more moves during the year. Practice guidance for placement searches is in place regarding the use of case consultation to engage workers in slow thinking to enhance care planning and reduce crisis led responses and a behaviour analyst joined the fostering service in February 2024 to provide input and support with placements at risk of breakdown.

There are significant challenges within housing supply which impacts on the provision of accommodation and access to accommodation in a planned and safe way for care leavers. Accommodation for young people aged 16+ is at capacity and we continue to develop options for care leavers such as supported lodgings. Whilst the number of care leavers completing at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training improved at 12 months, it has been recognised that the introduction of the Basic Income Pilot has correlated with the reduction in care leavers accessing education, employment and training for young people in the 24 months post leaving care. The 16+ Team have a new Multiply Worker within the team and are working to further develop links with the Youth Development Team and Employability to improve the contribution of all parts of the Council to this key corporate parenting priority.

2. How People are Shaping our Services

People that Use our Services

To understand the needs of the people who access our services, it is important we understand their views and experiences. In social services and wellbeing engagement and involvement is at the centre of everything we do. The principle we work to is '**nothing about me without me**'.

Engagement Activity

Whilst examples of engagement and involvement are referenced throughout this report, here are some highlights from the last year:

- The engagement of care experienced children and young people has been coordinated by the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer through a range of participation events and the care experienced youth forum supported by Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru. The engagement events and youth forum activity has informed and influenced service planning and delivery; including young people hosting the Corporate Parenting Strategy launch, naming the new children's residential home, planning an education achievement awards ceremony, informing the new complaints process in residential settings and being consulted on foster placements to inform changes within the service. Young people also participated in the tendering process for a new supported accommodation contract and the recruitment and selection process of a variety of new posts. The youth forum meet regularly to discuss a wide range of issues and take part in various national consultations, receive visitors and act as a soundboard to the Corporate Parenting Board on specific topics. The young people have felt really valued having the opportunity to have a say and be involved in matters that affect them: *"We are the experts and the ones in care or leaving care so should be fully involved."* *"Other young people coming into care will be happy and reassured I think that children and young people have been fully involved and not just the adults sorting this stuff out".* *"I love group and the people in it, they all know how hard in can be being in care and leaving care"*? *"I feel my voice can make a difference".*

How People are Shaping our Services

- Within older persons residential services and learning disability accommodation services feedback is captured in quarterly care reviews . The impact of this feedback is improved monitoring and compliance with regulatory standards, setting actions and agreed areas of improvements for services, regular visibility and accessibility of senior managers to both individuals supported and their teams. Overall improvements to service standards which has been reflected in annual inspections undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales.
- Within domiciliary care services, community meetings are facilitated by management teams and are accessible to all individuals; subject areas discussed include health and wellbeing, health and safety, 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. During 2023/24 People First members have assisted the Council with consultations about specialist supported living and day opportunities. They have led the 'Better Together Bridgend' initiative with 4 workstreams and developed a comments and complaints process. Members have also participated in regional service planning groups and local and regional service planning events. The organisation also continue to provide training to a range of organisations, advocacy, self-advocacy and support for participation as well as help with staff interviews and support to focus groups.
- The regionally supported substance misuse group meets on a monthly basis. During 2023/24 the group were engaged in responding to the Welsh Government draft mental health strategy and producing and approving the service user involvement strategy.
- Consultation and engagement took place with extra care tenants to understand what they would like to see from the extra care service in the future. Tenants were asked about aspects they like about the current service model and things they might

How People are Shaping our Services

like to change. The feedback from the tenants is being used to help inform a wider accommodation-based service review across all of adult social care, where options and proposals, which will include how extra care is to be delivered moving forward, are being developed.

- To monitor and review the embedding of the Signs of Safety Model, the Principal Officer Safeguarding, undertook an appreciative enquiry. The Principal Officer met with Mum to discuss their previous experience of involvement with children and family services compared to their current involvement. Mum noted a difference in the support received currently as she felt that she now understood concerns and what needed to happen as compared to having to 'try and make sense' of previous reports and concerns. This has allowed Mum to create a trusting relationship with her social worker as she felt she was working openly and honestly with her despite, this also being the same Social Worker who worked with Mum previously. Mum also noted a difference in the attempts to include family in supporting her and felt this time round the difference in approach gave her hope that she could succeed.
- The young carers network provides a platform for young carers and young adult carers to have their voice heard and acted upon. The network is driven by Bridgend Young Carers Ambassadors and holds large events on a termly basis attracting 100 plus young carers allowing insight, learning and co-production to take place.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with members of the Bridgend Youth Forum, People First Bridgend and Mental Health Matters to gain an insight into how people felt about the services they received. Each session focused on discussion around people's involvement and experience of social care over the past 12 months with a number of themes being identified at each group.

How People are Shaping our Services

Bridgend Youth Forum

Contact: The majority of young people knew who to contact with regard to their social care. There was a combination of the young people contacting the service themselves or the service contacting them. When an allocated social worker is on leave or away from the office the young people are not always aware of who else they can contact.

Communication: Whilst all young people were able to communicate in the language of their choice, all noted they had not been asked their preferred language.

Voice: Discussions noted a mixed response with some young people noting that they felt their voices were not always heard and that they did not always receive the right information and advice at the right time. All young people were aware of the advocacy service and had been informed of the service by either their social worker, youth worker or foster carer.

Care & Support: There was a mixed response in relation to the young people's experience of a social worker. One young person noted they had the "perfect social worker" who is "always there for me" and "got to know me and want I want to do"; Whilst another felt their social worker "spoke down" to them. One young person noted that they would like to get to know their social worker and extending the use out of "social worker profiles" was discussed.

People First Bridgend

Contact: Whilst the majority of members noted they know

How People are Shaping our Services

how to contact social services and would contact their social worker there were a small number that were not always aware of who to contact as they did not have an allocated worker. Some members of the group noted that if they required information or advice they would contact their social worker. However, there was a mixed response when asked if they were kept informed with their care and support.

Choice: When discussing with members if they had been involved in the decisions about their care, the majority felt that they had not. Most felt that due to staffing and available hours of care and support there was not enough flexibility to engage in their preferred activities. *“We have 4 hours but don’t know why. They told us they can’t give us more hours. They don’t tell us”*. Some members also expressed that they would like to be involved in more activities with people with their own age group rather than attend mixed age group day services.

Voice: Some members felt that they were not involved in decisions about their care and support and they did not always feel listened too. *“I’m moving away from (my adult family placement) [doesn’t know they are moving]. I’d rather stay with (adult family carers).”* However another member noted that *“I make decisions about how I like my home to be.”*

Community: Almost all members noted that they were accessing community groups or voluntary organisations. However, some members identified transport and accessibility as a barrier to accessing community groups and activities. Information on groups within the local area was discussed and it was noted that it would be beneficial to have a list of groups and activities all in one place.

Care & Support: The majority of members noted that they had been treated with dignity and respect. *“They are all friendly”, “We have a laugh”*. However a small number felt that they had not, with one member noting *“You get some people who are not so understanding, strict and need a lot more training”*. Most members have an allocated social worker noting; *“they*

How People are Shaping our Services

listened to what I had to say” and “did what they said they were going to do”. Overall, members were happy with the care and support they received.

Mental Health Matters

It is important to note that not all members are currently or have been in receipt of social care services over the last year.

Contact: Most members who responded indicated they know who to contact about social care, and for those that had received information and advice there was an almost 50/50 split in whether they thought they had received the right information at the right time.

Voice: Whilst most members felt that they had been listened too, a small number felt that they had not. When asked if they had actively been involved in decisions about their care, just over half noted they had.

Community: Everyone noted that they were accessing a community group or voluntary organisation. One member noted that they enjoyed attending Mental Health Matters as *“it gives me a purpose. I feel like I am helping others.”*

Care & Support: The majority of members were not happy with the care and support received, with one member noting they feel they need more support. For those members with experience of working with a social worker or social care worker there was a combination of responses. Some were very satisfied with the support received, *“Found Early Help really helpful”*, some were neither satisfied or dissatisfied and some were not satisfied, *“Social Worker is difficult to get hold of”*, and *“different people all the time”*. Overall, when members were asked if they were satisfied with their overall experience of social care there was an even split between satisfied and unsatisfied.

How People are Shaping our Services

On-Line Questionnaire

We hosted 4 online questionnaires for people who have had experiences of our services over the last 12 months between April and May 2024. We received a total of 85 responses, which is an increase of 16% compared to 2023/24.

• Adult Social Care	24
• Children & Young People	18
• Unpaid Carers	22
• Parents	21

Each questionnaire contained questions common across all 4 or had questions that were specific to that service area. An overall analysis of responses noted 40% of respondents were satisfied with the social care services they had received which is an increase of 25% when compared to last year. Other **areas of improvement** include:

- 44% increase in the number of children being treated with dignity and respect.
- 27% increase in the number of carers offered an assessment.
- 22% increase in parents reporting that they know who to contact in social care.
- 15% increase in adults being involved in decisions about how social care services.
- 94% of respondents were able to communicate in their language of choice, comparable with 2022/23.

This year we included a new question around people's experience with social workers or social care workers. Of those that responded, 72% reported having experience of a social worker or social care worker

It is important to acknowledge that the majority of people

How People are Shaping our Services

who responded to the questionnaires did not report an overall positive experience. Areas for improvement, noted in responses were:

- further development of communication to ensure people are accessing all areas of our service;
- ensuring everyone has the right information at the right time;
- ensuring everyone is involved in decisions about how social care services are provided to them;
- continuing to increase the number of assessments offered to unpaid carers;
- and continuing to raise the profile and role of advocacy, community and voluntary based services.

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

An overall analysis information gathered from the on-line questionnaire and focus groups noted the following as key areas for improvement:

- ensure people receive the right information or advice at the right time;
- improve communication with people who experience our services;
- where possible, minimise the reallocation cases to different social workers , and where this is not possible, ensure people are fully informed ahead of any changes;
- and improve how we respond to “what matters” to people.

Inspections

Regulated Services

During 2023/4, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) undertook 8

How People are Shaping our Services

inspections of regulated services provided by the Council. 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.

Within Adult Social Care, inspections were undertaken of 5 regulated residential-based establishments and the domiciliary support services by the CIW. All inspections identified there is a good standard of care and support provided across the services, with the following noted as key strengths:

- relationships between staff and individuals receiving care and support;
- leadership and management;
- the provision of activities;
- individuals happy with their care and support and their needs being well met;
- choice of meals and positive mealtime experiences.

It is positive to note that the inspections highlighted previous areas of improvement had been addressed and no priority action notices for 2023/24 were noted. One **area for improvement** was identified within one of our residential settings; of the updating of personal plans. The area for improvement is being addressed and achievement of the actions is monitored through the Council's regulatory tracker which is reported to the Governance and Audit committee through the Corporate Performance Assessment process.

In **Children and Family Services**, 3 regulatory inspections took place, 2 of residential establishments and 1 of Foster Wales Bridgend. Key strengths highlighted across the 2 residential establishments include:

- effective governance arrangements in place;
- supportive Responsible Individual (RI) who regularly audits and reviews and operations, ensuring continuous improvement and compliance;

How People are Shaping our Services

- comprehensive personal plans and risk assessments in place, ensuring tailored support for each child.
- positive feedback from external professionals and strong relationships between the child and care staff;
- a proactive approach in managing risks and promoting the child's independence is evident;
- children's health is promoted through registration at local health services, and efforts are made to reduce anxiety about appointments;
- and the home is clean, warm, and personalised, offering a sense of belonging and pride for the children.

It is positive to note that no priority action notices were identified, with 2 areas for improvement being identified; staffing challenges as a reliance on agency staff and standard of staff personal files. Recruitment and retention of care workers is a priority and processes have already been implemented to improve the personal files.

In November 2023, CIW undertook an inspection of Foster Wales Bridgend, which comprises of a General Fostering and Placement Team and Kinship and Permanence Team. The General Fostering and Placement Team considers the needs of children referred to the service and finds suitable care provisions, either in-house or externally. General foster carers are assessed and approved to look after children, providing respite, short and long-term care. The Kinship and Permanence team assess and approves connected carers, who are usually friends or family members of children and young people.

The inspection acknowledged the current context in which the service is operating, commenting that, *'the number of children who are referred to the service, outnumbers foster carers available'* it did highlight a number of **key strengths** which include:

How People are Shaping our Services

- children's views and voices are heard in several ways, and they are supported to access advocacy;
- the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum has provided opportunities for children to be involved in the development of the service and the recruitment and selection processes of staff;
- standards of care and support foster carers must provide are set out clearly within the statement of purpose, policies, and procedures for the service;
- unannounced visits are undertaken in compliance and the placement stability process in place is having a positive impact;
- appropriate checks are undertaken as part of foster carers' annual reviews and children are able to have a say in how their bedrooms are decorated to personalise them;
- safe recruitment checks are carried out with all staff and the Signs of Safety model is being embedded within the service;
- and arrangements in place for oversight and quality assurance of the service with Quality of Care and quarterly reports.

The inspection noted 8 areas for improvement which can be broadly categorised in to the 4 areas of: the 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.

The relevant action plans being monitored via the fortnightly Children's and Family Services Pressures meeting and quarterly performance management meetings.

A copy of all published regulatory services inspection reports can be found [here](#).

Local Authority Inspections

How People are Shaping our Services

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 with a focus on the following areas.

- the response to allegations of abuse and neglect at the point of identification;
- the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision-making in response to notifications and referrals;
- protecting children aged 11 and under at risk of abuse and neglect;
- the leadership and management of this work;
- and the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding partner arrangements in relation to this work.

The inspection noted a number of areas of positive practice and a number of areas for improvement, due to inconsistent practice, a summary of findings noted:

- overall, systems and relationships are in place to facilitate effective partnership working where a child is at risk of abuse and neglect;
- partners are working to a shared ethos of safeguarding children;
- managers and leaders provide a positive working together culture;
- actions generally happen within timescales with support and protection in place to meet needs;
- professionals make appropriate referrals but partner agencies, such as police and health, are struggling to resource the increase in child protection activity
- challenges in sharing information between agencies in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub;
- immediate actions are taken to promote children's safety but there can be gaps following a Section 47 safeguarding enquiry (S47);
- the quality of care and support protection plans (CASPP) is too variable;
- gaps in recording and in supervision;

How People are Shaping our Services

- schools across Bridgend work well with a wide range of services to support children and families;
- and there is good multi-agency attendance and participation in child protection meetings arranged under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP).

A multi-agency action plan reflecting the areas for improvement was developed in September 2023. Within the Council progress is overseen by the Social Services Improvement Board and the RSB. Actions identified for South Wales Police and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board are monitored by individual agencies own governance arrangements.

The full [JICPA report](#) outlines more detailed findings, noting strengths and areas for improvement for in each agency within the 4 areas of in the four main areas of Wellbeing, People, Partnerships, and Integration and Prevention.

CIW Engagement Activity: Dementia Service

In collaboration with CIW we completed an engagement activity of our integrated dementia service at the Bridgend Resource Centre. The outcome of the activity, which was noted as positive, will inform a review of services with a view to developing 'outreach' and community-based services and support models.

How People are Shaping our Services

Thank you

We would like to thank everybody who took the time to speak with us about the Integrated Dementia Service.

Summary

We visited the Integrated Dementia Service at Bridgend Resource Centre on 28 March 2024. We observed some activities, and we spoke with some staff and eight carers/family members about their views of the service.

This briefing summarises our findings from this engagement activity. It includes a sample of quotes we received, and strengths identified. Feedback we received did not highlight any areas for improvement.

Our findings have been shared with the local authority.

Quotes from carers and family members

"[my family member] is stimulated and engaged. They go on trips out and do activities."

"They [staff at the service] are amazing, they take great care of [my family member] and me."

"They [staff at the service] really go above and beyond."

"I have time to do things that are important to me, this makes a big difference."

"It is the difference between living and existing."

Strengths

People are treated with dignity and respect. Their views are sought, and they are listened too.

The staff team know people well and have developed good relationships with people who use the service and their carers. We observed kind and positive interactions between staff and people using the service.

Carers told us they value the service. They discussed how the service not only promotes the well-being of the person cared for but also the carers well-being, helping to promote and support carer resilience.

Some carers we spoke with provided examples where they felt staff had gone above and beyond to support the physical and emotional well-being of people using the service.

The service provides a flexible and person-centred approach, where people's individual needs and preferences are catered to.

There is a varied programme of activities for people to participate in if they wish.

Carers know who to contact if they need to speak with someone at the service and receive a timely response.

The service demonstrates effective partnership working via an integrated model to enhance the well-being of people and their carers.



7-Minute Summary

 0300 7900 126

 CIWLocalAuthority@gov.wales

Compliments and Complaints

During 2023/24 the directorate received 362 compliments and 182 complaints. In the last year our compliments have increased by 41% while complaints have decreased by 7%.

An analysis of complaints received during the year highlighted 3 key themes: lack of support, staff conduct and communication. We have implemented a process to regularly monitor complaint information so that we can identify not only areas of good practice but also learning outcomes so that the appropriate training and support to improve can be put in place.

There were 8 stage 2 (formal) complaints in 2023/24. Of the 36 matters investigated, 17 complaints were upheld, 5 were partially upheld and 14 were not upheld. All recommendations from stage 2 complaints are responded to and actions reviewed to ensure that we continually learn, develop and improve.

How People are Shaping our Services

It is important to note that of the 182 complaints received during the year, 77% of all complaints were resolved at the informal stage, and 96% by stage 1 of the statutory complaints process. This evidences our focus on providing a good local resolution for the people and their families and carers that use our services.

"A, Thank you for all your help and support for my mother and our family over the last six months, and for helping us acquire the very best setting for my mother. You have been amazing!"

Adult Social Care

"Thank you I wanted to let you know what an outstanding practitioner B is, I have had feedback from Carers who stated they have not seen such good practice, they have difficult conversations but find a way through and are thrilled to be working with C. I have enjoyed working with him too."

Children and Family Services

How People are Shaping our Services

Quality Assurance Framework

The directorate quality assurance framework has the voice of people as a core standard in all quality assurance activity.

The quality assurance system has been strengthened by the appointment of a Quality Assurance Officer in October 2023. Through embedding the Quality Assurance Framework and subsequent reporting in January 2024, **clearer** standards have been developed, along with plans for how the quality assurance system can be further improved.

Themes observed from the monitoring and review of quality assurance identified the need for performance improvement in compliance rates to case file auditing, direct observations and reflective supervision. A programme of development to increase compliance to the Quality Assurance Framework is in place. **Evidencing** strengths-based practice models in recorded work is a key theme emerging by auditors. Steps to align the Children's Social Care Signs of Safety approach and strengths-based, outcomes focussed model in Adult Social Care are therefore under development. Other themes identified include recorded work needing to be up to date and/or transferred to the case management system and more evidence of informed decision making and how expectations are managed in the climate of service pressures and demands.

Strong evidence of positive, relationship-based practice was another theme underpinning meaningful change with individuals in receipt of services by the Local Authority. Consistent evidence of co-produced, collaborative assessments, plans and reviews with individuals, families, carers and multi-agency partners were also observed. **Safeguarding and risk management** plans were central to practice with evidence of managerial oversight in line with supervision policy to support staff.

3. Adult Social Care

During 2023/24, Adult Social Care developed a **draft “Three-Year Plan for Sustainable Care and Support for Adults in Bridgend”** which, sets out the strategic objectives, priorities and plans required to deliver **sustainable and effective social care** and wellbeing support for adults in the County Borough.

The plan builds on work that has progressed during 2023/24 , focussing on: systematic implementation of a **strength based**, outcome focussed model of social work practice; the **transformation** of learning disabilities; the modernisation of support at home services including resetting of reablement to **maximise** the number of people who are supported to retain or regain their **independence**. The draft plan will be presented for pre-scrutiny in July 2024, followed by **engagement events** over the summer with the final plan being presented to Cabinet in the Autumn of 2024.

Following the social work review completed during November 2023 Adult Social Care also implemented a **new operating model** in February 2024. More information on this model can be found on page 46.

The **Strengths-based model of practice – working to achieve outcomes’** has been implemented across our community teams, and extended to the independent sector direct care domiciliary care services in November 2023. More information on how the model was developed can be found on page 95.

Adult Social Care

A strengths-based model of practice: working to achieve outcomes



1. What is the model?

The model is an Adult Social Care practice framework.

It reflects the principles of the SSWBA 2016 and the Code of Professional Practice.

The framework reflects good practice that has developed in BCBC.

The model supports people's right to:

- have respectful, collaborative conversations about their wellbeing.
- to take part in decisions about them
- to identify how their family friends and local community may play a part in their life.
- to help them achieve their personal outcomes.

2. When can I use the model?

We should observe the principles of the model in all of our practice, and in all of our contacts with individuals, their carers, and their families.

The approach the model defines should be used by social work, social care, and occupational therapy staff working in BCBC.

The model can also be used by allied health and therapy staff working in our multi-disciplinary teams.

The model should be applied when safeguarding.

3. How can I use the model?

Staff can ensure that the principles for practice guide their work.

The model can be used to help explain our role when working with individuals, carers, families.

The model should be introduced in induction and referred to in supervision.

Remember the model has two chief elements- strengths and outcomes.

Respectful, sensitive, collaborative conversations allow for relationships to develop. Out of this relationship, strengths and outcomes should become clear, rather than questions that we ask people.

7. What next?

Meet with your supervisor and ask them to share any practice tools they have found useful.

Keep an eye out for any training opportunities and attend any mandatory training required.

If you are unsure about the model contact David McManus in SCWDP.

Talk to your supervisor during supervision about how to use the model in your practice.



4. What tools do I need?

Practice using the O.A.R.S tool:

- open questions
- affirmations – listen out for good things, acknowledge them.
- reflections – to check out understanding and seek insights.
- summaries – a summary of the conversation and highlight strengths you have heard and 'what matters' to people.

6. Training

An awareness workshop will be included in the First Year in Practice programme.

A two-day skills-based course will be available for new starters, and multi-disciplinary staff working in BCBC teams.

A refresher course is being developed for more experienced staff.

5. What about people who may not be able to have a conversation easily?

We must not assume that a person is unable to express 'what matters to them' because they may have an impairment or a diagnosed condition. We must '*presume capacity*' unless we suspect otherwise. Even then, as capacity is '*decision specific*' it doesn't follow, for example, that because someone is unable to manage their money, they are unable to share with us what matters and is important in their life. We must work with those who know them to fully understand what matters to individuals in order that we can act in their best interests by knowing their strengths and outcomes.

3. Adult Social Care

2023/24 Key Achievements

During the last year, the **resetting of reablement** and **support at home** services has been a key focus. The reablement model has been reviewed to improve the effective use of resources, timeliness of support and **focussed intervention** with other professionals. The services have reviewed hospital discharge processes and have implemented a **short term assessment** service approach, enabling people, via a 6 week programme, to fully assess and **understand** people's **strengths** and needs.

We have progressed work to **modernise** the support at home service, we have **improved working patterns**. To further support this modern approach, the Mobile Response Team and Team Leads have access to **6 electric vehicles**. Both service developments demonstrate the **value** of our service to both those who access our service as well as staff. Whilst staff benefit from an improved **work life balance** and less wear and tear on their own vehicles those that access our services are ensured that the Mobile Response Team has the necessary resources to respond in a **timely manner, in doing so reducing conveyances to hospital and taking pressure off health services**.

In accordance with the Welsh Government national direction and policy, our integrated community services developed a **focused approach** on working to support adults with complex needs and those at risk of hospital admission. This has been undertaken to provide prudent and **preventative** approaches for adults living with disability, frailty and primary mental health challenges. Integrated teams comprise 9 professional groups working together to develop care and support plans around the individual – Mr and Mrs Jones – to ensure a seamless approach to meet health and care needs.

To further support the **remodelling of community services**, a complex needs integrated dementia day service has been developed to enable a more **flexible** approach to carer support and access which is supporting carers to keep caring and prevent the need for care home placements. It has provided an

Adult Social Care

outreach service to enable people who may not be able to travel to the centre to be supported within their local community. The professional staff at the day service also provide outreach support in people's homes to translate the behaviour and therapy plans to enable family carers to build knowledge and resilience within their caring role.

To support the **Learning Disability Transformation Programme**, an initial **review** of regional and national service models has been completed. We have established a task and finish group who are **exploring options** for day opportunities. As noted above the continued transformation of learning disabilities is a **key priority** of our 3 year strategic plan.

We have been able to **reduce** our **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard** assessments and renewals **waiting list**, at the year-end we had cleared the backlog meaning people have effective safeguards in place. The service strives to ensure that assessments are now being completed in a **timely manner** by in-house and independent Best Interest Assessors.

While we have seen a 2% increase in the number of contacts received from carers, this was not reflected in the number of **carers assessments** completed. As noted within the prevention and wellbeing section of this report the Cares Wellbeing Service supported 1249 unpaid carers, by offering information and advice and proportionate assessments within the community. In addition, we have developed a workstream to look at carers support which will focus on ensuring that the relevant systems and processes are in place to accurately reflect the number of assessments offered to unpaid carers and the number where the offer was accepted.

Promoting and Improving the Wellbeing of those we help

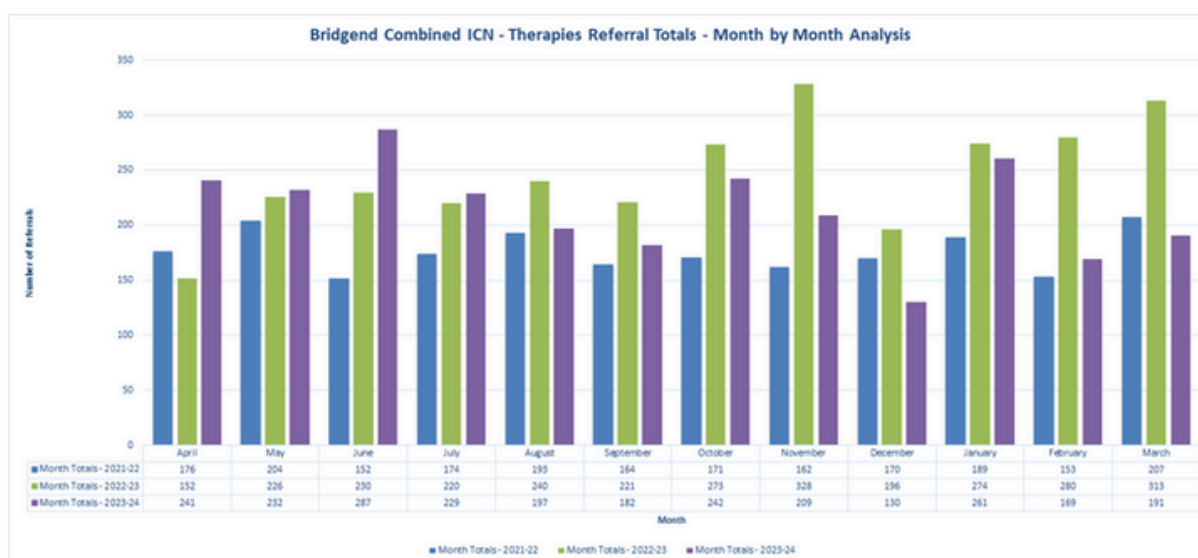
Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

To ensure that our **integrated community services** in

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Bridgend are sustained and enhanced in the new regional integrated model we are embedding our strength based model of practice, across all teams to ensure assessments and reviews focus on people's strengths and resources and what matters to them. To further support this integrated model, the service also had an increased focus on hospital avoidance and frailty. Adult Social Care is also linking in with the Welsh Ambulance Service Team (WAST), hospitals and GP partners to target support to those at most risk.

The team is successfully implementing **preventative strategies**, such as tracking people who have recently been discharged from hospital, through our multi-disciplinary team meetings. We are also developing **innovative work** around early identification of pressure ulcer avoidance through integrated intervention. The focus and impact of the team is supporting adults to live longer in their own homes and communities and through timely multi-disciplinary intervention we are achieving good success in hospital admission avoidance and prevention in the deterioration of people's health. This is leading to good outcomes for adults and supporting cost avoidance.



To enable us to understand and **evaluate the impact** of the **integrated community services** model we have developed and revised a number of performance dashboards in line with the strength based model approach. We are also

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reviewing population segmentation data to ensure we are focussing on the most vulnerable adults in a timely way.



Adult Social Care: New Operating Model

Our new operating model was fully implemented on 26th February 2024. The objectives of the new model are to:

Improve Customer services with outcomes of clear access criteria for teams so that individuals can access the most suitable MDT for individuals.

Improve Customer Journey with outcomes of clear pathways when travelling through the system and reduction in internal 'hand off' so that the individuals are entering the system at the appropriate place.

Improve Staff Experience with outcomes of staff having a clear remit of their work and social work practice models.

Improve Social Work Standards with outcomes that will ensure the operating model supports integration with health and recognition is given toward areas of expertise and specialism.

What we did

An evidence-based methodology was used to analyse the existing operating model to identify areas of improvement.

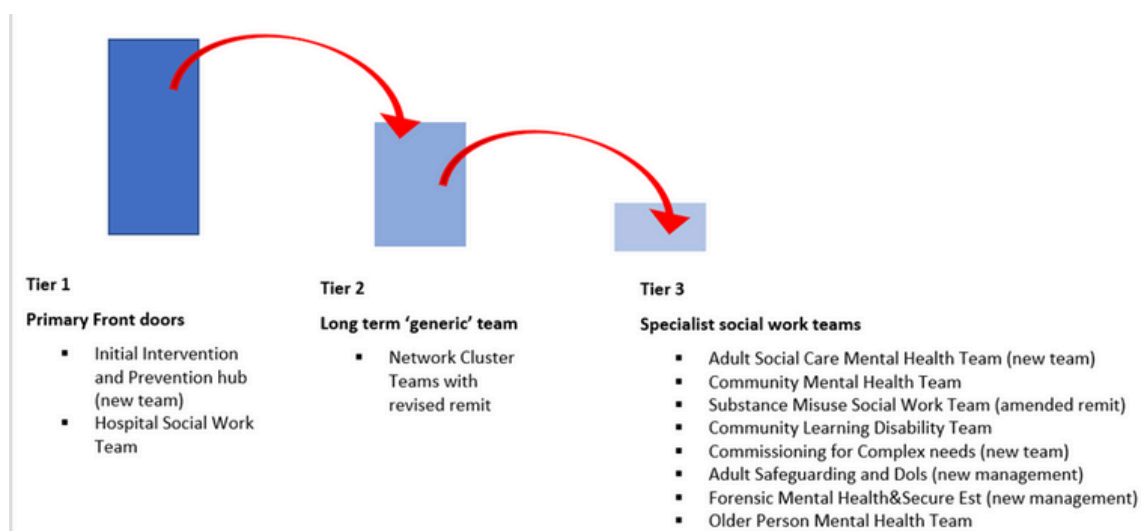
As a result of this analysis, a model was agreed that would:

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- Improve overall services
- Remove gaps in access criteria
- Mitigate pressure points in the operating model
- Create Clear flow between social work teams

The new model introduced the concept of tiers, where each tier will manage varying levels of demand and complexity. The tier concept ensures individuals are responded to through an innovative, robust multi-disciplinary hub, which will be the 'Front Door to Adult Social Care'.

Time specific interventions will ensure proportionate initial assessments which will direct the next stage of the individual's journey through the service. The assessments and direction of the journey of the individual will be done by utilising evidence informed decision making, focusing on strengths, community assess and crisis intervention.



Where we are now

Adult Social Care are now operating on a model with the concept of tiers, where tiers manage varying levels of demand and complexity.

Individuals are initially responded to through an innovative, robust, multi-disciplinary Early Intervention and Prevention hub which is seen as the 'Front Door to Adult Social Care'.

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To work in line with our Adult Social Care Practice Model, all practitioners work to our high strengths-based outcome focused practice to individuals, where the focus is on maximising community assets and preventative approaches to avoid early entry in our long term, specialist teams.

Remits of our long term and specialist teams have been widened, along with the introduction of new teams, to ensure that the model supports people well with long term and complex disabilities and ill health.

The operating module will continue to be evaluated to ensure the objectives agreed are being met and signs of obstruction to the flow of the individual's journey are identified and resolved as soon as possible.

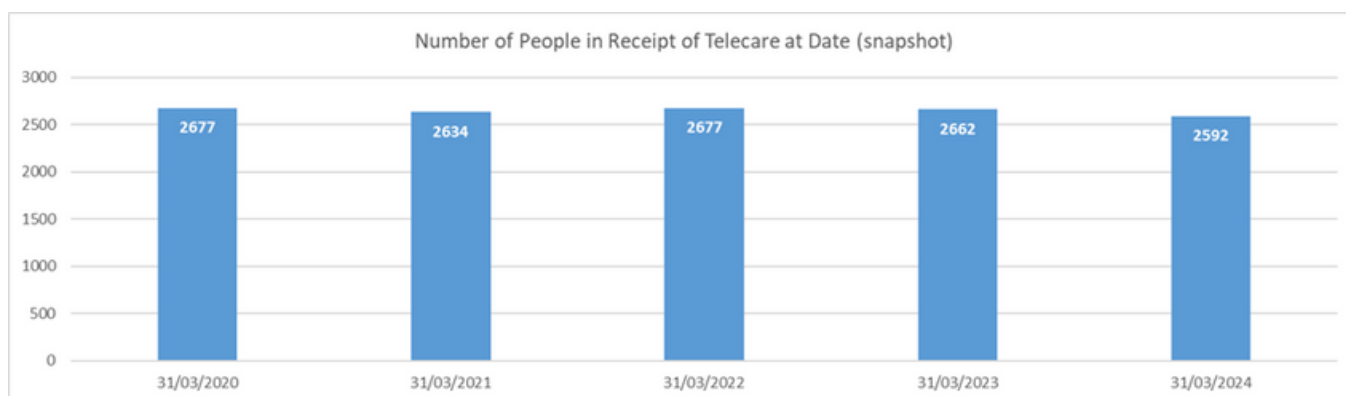
Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

To support tier 1 services including crisis response and early intervention services we focussed on restructuring the model. The creation of the Adult Social Care Mental Health team focusses on early intervention whilst we continue to support our partners at Mental Health Matters who operate a 'Wellbeing Retreat' 5 evenings a week which offers a crisis response. To further support early intervention services there has been significant improvement on the time taken to complete initial assessments and a multi-agency approach implemented at the front door to support people on non-active caseload. We have also further developed the links between primary and secondary mental health to provide a tiered response which enables improved flow for people as their needs change to ensure the right multi-disciplinary team is supporting the person at the right time.

The **analogue to digital** switch over of our **Telecare** Services is progressing well and is forecast to be completed by the end of July 2024. To focus on **increasing** the number of people who will benefit from the Telecare Service, we have developed a new in-house training model to raise the awareness and benefits

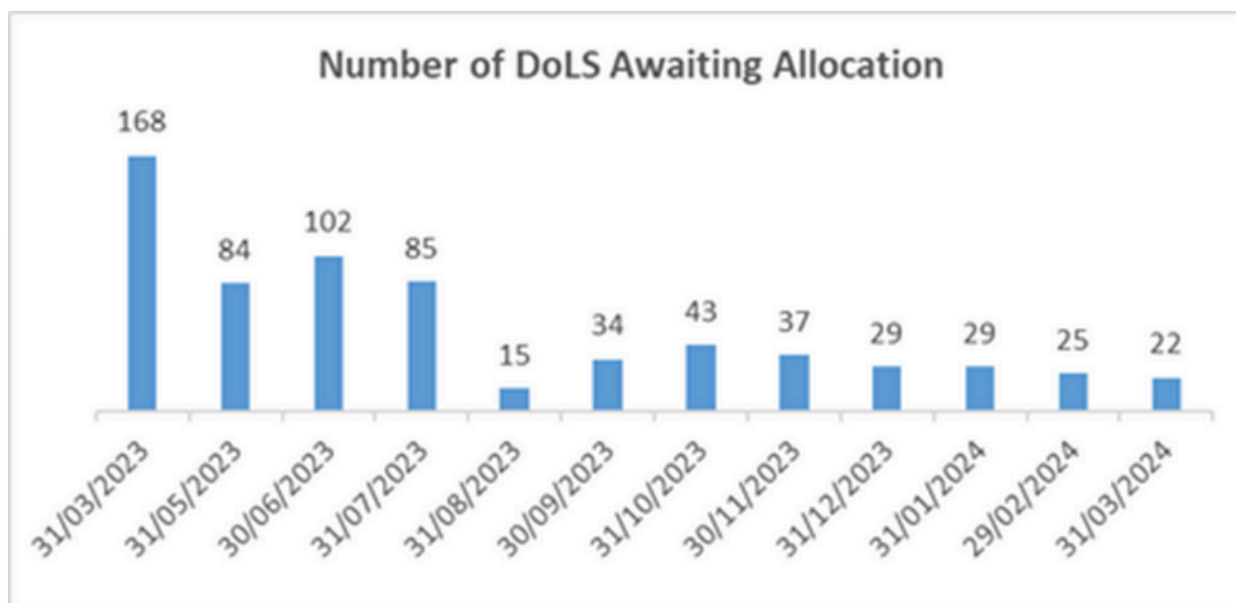
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of the service to staff across the directorate to increase referrals to the service. To further support new pathways for Technology Enhanced Care we begun to explore the wider benefits of digital technology on promoting people's independence and are working with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board on a technology enhanced care project to support improved medication adherence within the community.



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

We have reviewed our Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) processes to further strengthen our model to ensure the continued safeguarding of people's rights. During the year we employed additional capacity to address our backlog. This has resulted in the Best Interest Assessors and independent Best Interest Assessors effectively managing the timely delivery of assessments.



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To **enhance** the **sharing** of **safeguarding information** we worked with key partners to implement the integrated safeguarding GOSS system and are reviewing internal processes to identify how best to utilise the system.

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

We continue to work in **partnership** with the **Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board** and **third sector partners** to **develop seamless services** in line with the **dementia standards** for Wales and following a mapping exercise across the borough we are working together to implement a new contract with the Alzheimer's Society and also with Age Connect to develop a connector role. These services will become an integral part of the network teams, the complex dementia day service and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board's new memory assessment service. Our leisure partner HALO has also been provided with funding to develop social inclusion opportunities for people living with needs associated with complex dementia.

Adult Social Care

Project (activity): Specialist Dementia Unit at Bridgend Resource Centre



- As part of an integrated / multidisciplinary team the dementia resource within Bridgend Resource Centre, an 'outreach' and community-based service was developed to support individuals who are living with dementia/cognitive related issues to access services in a pre-emptive and timely way.
- During the process of developing an out-reach and community based model, the team consisted of: team leader, assistant team leader, day service assistants, mental health nurse and occupational therapist (OT) / OT assistant.
- Review the dementia resource at Bridgend Resource Centre with a view to developing 'outreach' and community-based services and support models.

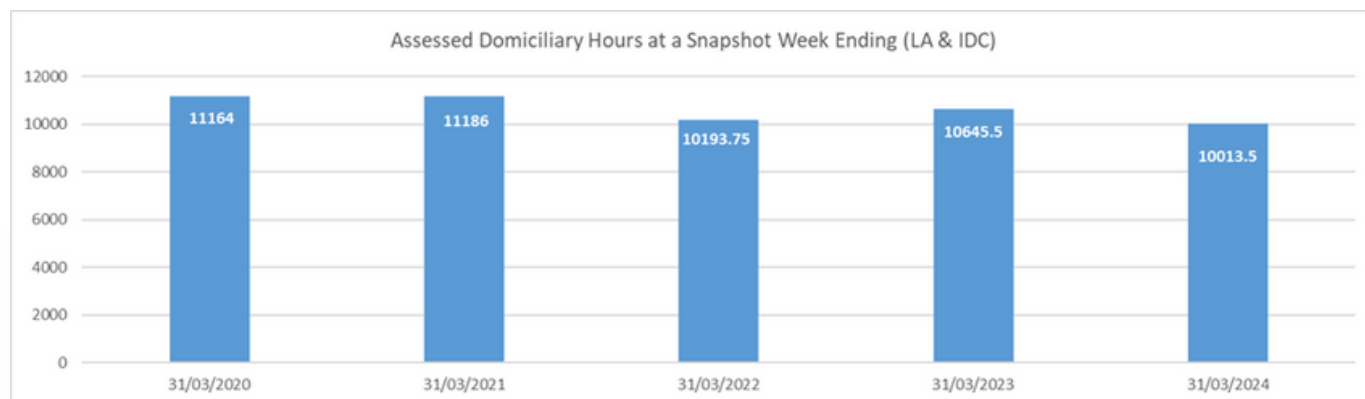


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During the year we **developed** a learning disability transformation **action plan** which includes the support of the daytime **opportunities**. Implementation of the action plan has commenced and focusses on a number of key workstreams which include; outcome focussed assessments, specialist brokerage function; single carers project and continuing health care. Each workstream has a dedicated work plan with key actions progressing into 2024/25 and the continued **embedding** of the strengths based **practice model**, will support staff on focussing on the **strengths of individuals** and active **participation** in their **community**.

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

To **develop** the **Support at Home Service workforce** in line with **national policy** we developed a Care Worker Charter. To further support the development of the service we improved our marketing strategy and are developing a pathways to care programme with Employability Bridgend. We are also exploring opportunities to develop an apprenticeship programme for the support at home service.



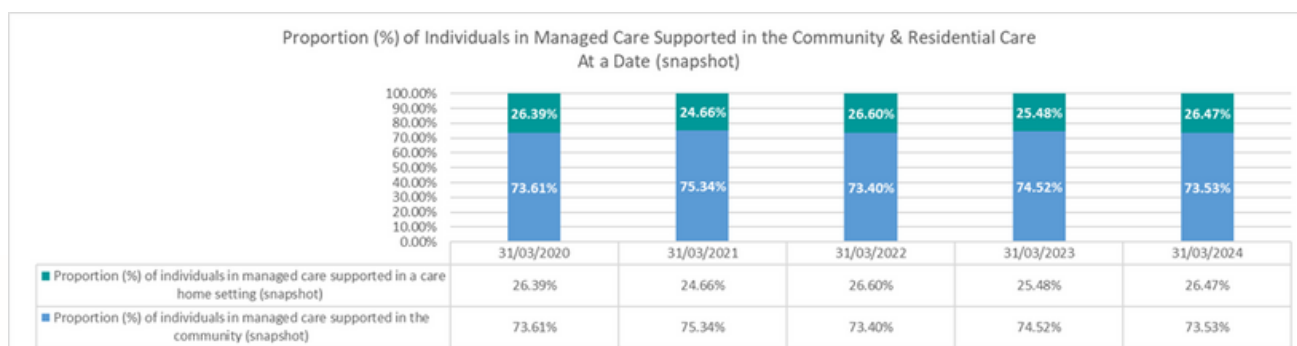
During this year, our Social Care Workforce Development Team has worked jointly with our **Autistic Spectrum Disorder** Project Development Officer to **identify the learning**

Adult Social Care

and development needs of our workforce. Our plan is based on the National Autism Training Framework for Wales 2021. The first phase 2023/24, sought to equip staff working in the directorate to achieve an awareness level of understanding (L1) with the aim of improving the lives of autistic people and their families by the workforce gaining a greater understanding of autism. We have made available a series of **E-learning modules**, along with one on Tourette's, produced by the National Autistic Society in conjunction with the LGA. This provides a platform ahead of delivery in 2024-05 for more skills based training (L2 and L3) in communications, assessment, and care and support planning.

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

In-line with the **10-year regional capital strategy**, the directorate's Commissioning Team commenced a **review** of all **accommodation** based services to identify accommodation options to meet population need. In response to the finding of the Population Needs Assessment and Market Stability Report, we have developed 5-year (2023-28) commissioning strategies across the three main population areas (Children's Services and Transition, Adult's with Lifelong Conditions/Complex Needs, and Older Person's Regulated Community Care), setting out the key priority areas and commissioning intentions for regulated services in these areas.



One of the workstreams of the **daytime opportunity assessment** action plan focusses on **social enterprises** to support **young adults with a learning disability** to develop their employability skills. We are aiming to focus on 2 projects which will be linked to **supported employment** and day opportunities. In early

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stages of mapping future potential options.

Case Studies: Supported Employment

CASE STUDY: SID – WILDMILL



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
FOR OUR TRAINEES

“ SID SAID:
“I love working in the café,
I really look forward to
coming into work.” ”

Sid recently started a work placement at our café within Bryngarw Park.

Sid has been so successful within this work placement; he has now been offered paid employment and has settled in really well as part of the café team. Sid worked hard on developing his skills and has grown in confidence throughout his time with us. Sid really enjoys working at the café and is saving to “buy something big”.

CASE STUDY: DEAN – BETTWS



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
FOR DISABLED ADULTS

“ DEAN SAID:
“I am loving volunteering at Sue Ryder (charity shop). I want to continue doing this job and I have enjoyed meeting the other staff and being supported by them” ”

Dean is a keen member of both Wood-B and B-Leaf, and now he has the addition of being a volunteer at Sue Ryder Charity Shop in Bridgend.

Dean has been so excited to begin this role and do something that has purpose and can benefit other people's lives. Dean is currently being supported by Awen to attend each week, learn how the shop runs, its layout and how to present items for selling once they have been tagged and priced.

This role gives Dean a huge sense of independence and he has such pride in his work. Dean is learning to work with a totally different team from his peers within Awen. He loves being around the other staff and takes great pride in the work that he does independently.

CASE STUDY: DEAN – BETTWS

Dean has been inspired by his English Language course and decided that he would like to start a work placement in the library.

Dean is well known in his local community and wanted to enhance his sense of belonging. Dean's local library is within walking distance, so it has promoted independence, alongside positive health, and wellbeing. Dean's responsibilities include setting up equipment, returning books to the correct shelf, picking books, and greeting customers.



EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR OUR TRAINEES

“ DEAN SAID:
“I have English lessons in B-Leaf, they help with my reading. I like to read Harry Potter Books and I am happy being in the library with all the books.” ”

DEAN'S MUM, TRUDY SAID:
“Dean loves going to B-leaf and Wood-B and enjoys all the tasks. We are overjoyed at his library placement; we feel it will be good for him to volunteer in his local community.” ”

Adult Social Care

Key Service Priorities for 2024/25

Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.	We will ensure that quality assurance of practice enables the quality and effectiveness of practice to be evaluated through the lens of the experience of the people that we work with.
Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	Work with partners to agree and implement a plan to redesign care and support for people with long term needs - help people with long-term conditions to gain opportunities for greater independence in the longer term.
Quality Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm	To have a strong and effective shared approach to adult safeguarding understood and implemented by agencies and practitioners across Bridgend.
Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society	We have developed a workstream to support adults to develop employability skills.
Quality Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy, domestic, family and personal relationships	Develop and implement a plan to increase the number and range of effective short-term interventions for people in the community – and thus increase the impact of short term help to reduce or eliminate the need for longer-term solutions.
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	Work with our colleagues in Housing to develop Housing with Care provision sufficient to meet future need and demand, and reprofile BCBC's accommodation-based services across adult and children's services (both internally and externally)

4. Children and Family Services

Within Children and Family Services our aim is 'Working together to enable better outcomes for children, young people and their families via strong relationships, effective practice and timely and responsive services, which support children and families to live together (wherever possible), work on difficulties and safeguard children from harm'.

In September 2023, Council approved a 3-year strategic plan for children and families in Bridgend. The plan sets out a sustainable future operating model 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.

The evidence based analysis which underpins the 3-year service plan is that a number of things need 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

Good progress was made in progressing the priorities within the plan in its first 6 months of implementation in 2023/24.

Children and Family Services

2023/24 Key Achievements

To **reduce variability** in the quality of **practice**, Children and Family Services continues to offer 'Back to Basics' training to provide a foundation for strength-based practice within safeguarding. Following the launch of the **Signs of Safety** strength-based model of practice in March 2023, 113 staff attended a 5 day training event and 178 attended the 2 day event. A Signs of Safety Training Strategy for 2024/25 is being finalised.

To ensure that the practice model was supported by a **quality assurance** framework, the Signs of Safety Meaningful Measures workstream compliments the work of the Quality Assurance Officer, who is also part of the workstream. This workstream has been designed to assist leaders to understand what we are doing, how well we are doing it, and the difference it makes for children, young people, their families and carers, so we can better improve service consistency, quality, and impact. The workstream aims to consider:

- the breadth - what elements of the signs of safety approach is being used by practitioners.
- the depth – how aligned is the practice with the fidelity of the framework and
- and the impact - the outcomes the approach is helping workers achieve with families.

These aims will be measured via surveys, good practice examples, quality assurance audits and management information. A Signs of Safety staff survey was sent to teams in September 2023 to establish a baseline for future surveys, 32 responses were received. The aim of the survey was to measure how confident practitioners were in using the practice framework, any worries they had in particular areas and what was working well in relation to the implementation.

To support the continued learning from child practice reviews we have developed dashboards to provide information at a

Children and Family Services

team level to strengthen management oversight and monitoring of services. As new services are developed, dashboards are regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to meet needs as new services are developed. We have also worked with regional partners to implement the GOSS system to support the sharing of information with key partners in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub which is making a positive improvement.

During the year we continued to progress the children's social worker **workforce plan**. The directorate has a dedicated Marketing and Communications Officer to drive forward recruitment campaigns over the next two years and there have been several specific workforce related activities. These include the recruitment of 13 experienced international social workers, a review of job descriptions, the introduction of both a market supplement, and a new social worker career progression framework. We have also continued to 'grow our own' social workers of the future. These efforts have meant we have been able to significantly reduce our agency children's social worker numbers.

To ensure **fit for purpose operating models** across the service area, we completed a review of the operational and management arrangements. Following budget confirmation of sustainable investment, a restructure report has been agreed and progressed to implementation. The intention of this model is to reduce demand on statutory services ensuring children and families access the right support from the right service at the right time.

The retention and recruitment of a **permanent workforce** is required to support and deliver fit for purpose operating models and the table below highlights progress made over the last year.

Between March 2023 and April 2024 our agency workforce reduced by 14% with our full-time occupancy increasing by the same rate evidencing our commitment to decreasing reliance on agency staff.

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Childrens - SW Trend Analysis (including SWA)	13/03/2023	29/06/2023	08/08/2023	05/09/2023	04/10/2023	10/11/2023	01/12/2023	05/01/2024	29/01/2024	23/02/2024	19/04/2024
Establishment	149.99	156.52	148.52	148.52	153.21	155.21	156.21	161.74	162.75	162.75	164.94
Current Occupancy FTE (Excluding agency, includes Sickness and Maternity)	106.31	124.91	115.41	114.91	120.72	123.94	127.94	127.75	127.75	129.75	120.94
Current Occupancy %	71%	80%	78%	77%	79%	80%	82%	79%	78%	80%	73%
Agency FTE	73	77	73	64	68	62	60	55	54	50	44
Workforce including agency FTE	179.31	201.91	188.41	178.91	188.72	185.94	187.94	182.75	181.75	179.75	164.94
% of workforce which is agency	41%	38%	39%	36%	36%	33%	32%	30%	30%	28%	27%

We have developed a **Commissioning Strategy for Children, Young people and Transition Services**. The commissioning strategy covers a 5-year period setting out the commissioning intentions for these services during this time with implementation beginning in early 2024/25 . The commissioning strategy, whilst noting these groups as a priority, include a focus on the provision of accommodation, care and support services for children with disabilities, the accommodation and care and support needs of care experienced children, young people and care leavers.

International Recruitment Case Study for ADSS Anti-racist Wales Report

We initiated our international recruitment project in April of 2022 in response to an increasing level of vacancies and dependency on agency workforce. We welcomed the first two members of our cohort in March 2023 and as of March 2024 we have 10 internationally recruited Social Workers in post and three further eagerly undergoing pre-employment processes. Our offer includes sponsorship, visas for dependants, relocation allowance, and pastoral support, whilst we ask for a minimum of 3 years post qualifying experience in statutory child protection settings through a rigorous and extended selection process. Our appointed social workers have originated from Zimbabwe, South Africa, and the United States of America. Some have chosen to relocate alone, and others with their families.

Our appointments have had a highly positive impact on our vacancy levels as well as increasing diversity, bringing additional experience and perspectives which have been well received and, in many cases, have been an asset to our teams and the children and families of Bridgend. All have settled well into their respective

Children and Family Services

teams, successfully completed their probation periods where applicable, and undertaken a programme of training to assimilate their practice to the Welsh context. We expect our international social workers will achieve holding full caseloads (equivalent to other members of their respective teams) between 6 months to 1 year of being in post, evidenced by those who have already been with us for this period. An independent survey conducted in January 2024, when 8 of our social workers were in post, concluded that *“none of the Social Workers spoken to described having experienced direct discrimination or racism since moving to Wales and most of them spoke specifically about feeling welcomed into their local communities and the Local Authority”*.

Due to this being the first project of this kind for the teams involved, there was initial difficulty understanding the varying levels of capability, learning, and experience each appointee brought. For example, team managers needed to adjust for each individual, the level of support available, the expectation put on each new starter, and the pace of their learning and progression. Similarly, each individual presented varying pastoral needs and queries. Whilst dealing with these differences presented challenges and impacted capacity for team managers and other members of the project workforce, they proved to be learning experiences for all which helped improve the experience for future new practitioners. A quote from one of our team managers on their experience, *“Whilst the first few weeks were very stressful, from my point of view, this process have been a success”*. Our first two practitioners *“are very settled in the team. They are key team members who are well thought of. Both are holding complex cases and whilst they still have things to learn this is no different to any social worker in the team”*.

Social Care Workforce Officer

Children and Family Services

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

To strengthen engagement and involvement, a young people's forum has been established run by Tros Gynnal Plant. The forum meets on a regular basis to ensure care experienced children and young people have an opportunity to have their voices heard, express their wishes and feelings on matters important to them and be involved in shaping service delivery.

The Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer facilitated an **action planning engagement** event in June 2023 and involved a range of professionals from a number of organisations.

To understand the **experience** of the families who work with children's social care the Principal Officer, Social Work Transformation and the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer have worked with the Early Help service to ascertain how the **views of parents** can be sought within our existing mechanisms and networks.

The Signs of Safety, Meaningful Measures Workstream has developed **surveys for families and partner agencies** which focus on the parent and partner agency experience of working with a social worker or attending meetings such as Core Groups or Child Protection Conferences. The surveys do not request any personal information, with questions capturing the extent to which the principles and disciplines of Signs of Safety are reflected in practice. One of our Team Manager's completed an engagement exercise with 10 families to understand their **experience** of online Child Protection Conferences. Themes identified in the **engagement** process noted some parents found online meetings less intimidating, whilst others reported they did not feel as included and that professionals were not paying attention. However, all parents noted they felt listened too with most also noting they felt an equal participant. Our Independent Reviewing Team are currently developing a parent survey in relation to face to face meetings, which will be rolled out in the Autumn.

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Care Experienced Youth Forum Mural

During the Autumn 2024, our Care Experienced Youth Forum took part in workshops as part of a national campaign, in partnership with Foster Wales, to dispel misconceptions about young people in care. Out of this piece of work, and with the aid of the former Welsh Children's Poet Laureate a mural has been produced in Brackla, Bridgend.



At the end of June 2024, the campaign won 2 awards:

- A Low Budget Campaign Award at the PRCA DARE Awards Cymru, honouring outstanding PR and communications; and
- Gold in the low-budget category of the CIPR Excellence Awards in London (a UK-wide PR awards ceremony). These are our voices campaign was up against several national and international company campaigns.

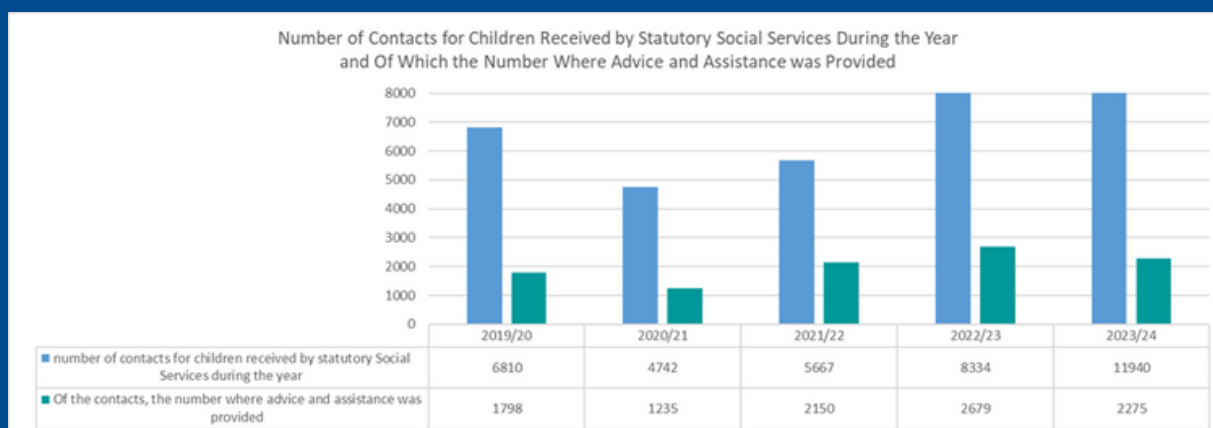


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Reflecting on the campaign, judges said they were: "Impressed by how this campaign was grounded in the real experiences of young people in care which led to an emotional insight the campaign was built around, based on a shared experience of this group".

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

We reviewed **preventative** early help and **family support services**. The edge of care and early help screening team joined our new children and families division on 1st April 2024 to work towards a single front door for children and families in Bridgend.



Based on priority areas as defined by the Population Needs Assessment and market stability reports, a **commissioning strategy for family support services is being developed**.

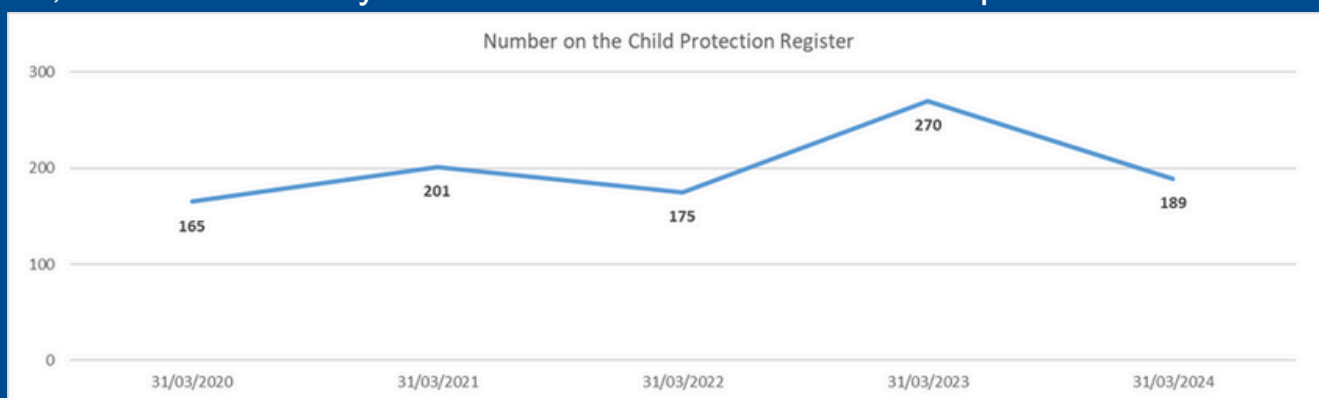
We **reviewed** existing **partnerships** to ensure the most effective set of arrangements for **joint** and **integrated working**. The Bridgend Joint Operational Group of safeguarding partners continues to meet monthly to review working practices between partner agencies. This has been identified as good practice within recent inspections and provides a forum for discussion on best practice related to safeguarding between partner agencies. Looking ahead to 2024/25, work has already commenced on the development of multi-agency

Children and Family Services

threshold guidance which will assist professionals in identifying where support for children and families is best placed to refer appropriately to these services.

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

We continue to ensure **learning** from **child practice reviews** and other in-depth analysis is systematically embedded. Key activities have included the publication of 7-minute briefings and targeted workshops. Child practice reviews are referenced in core safeguarding training and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board held workshops during Safeguarding Week. To ensure learning ties in with our **quality assurance** processes the Group Manager, Safeguarding and the Quality Assurance Officer are members of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board, Children's Quality Assurance and Performance Group.



The table below outlines key stages of the child protection process and evidences the improvements made based on our learning and strengthened processes. Whilst contacts increased by 43% during the year, the number of children on the child protection registered as at 31st March decreased by 30%.

Metric Description	2022/23	2023/24
The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services	8334	11940
The total number of Initial Strategy Meetings concluded during the year	2154	2274
The total number of Strategy Discussions held during the year that progressed to Section 47 Enquiries	1557	1655
The total number of Section 47 Enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference	406	376
Number of Child Protection Registrations	379	328
Number of Child Protection De-Registrations	284	409

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Due to strengthened screening arrangements within our Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, the proportion of contacts progressing to of initial strategy decreased from 26% in 2022/23 to 19% in 2023/24. This **improvement** can also be attributed to the implementation of Signs of Safety at the point of screening as well as strengthening our **early help offer**, and improved signposting of contacts.

The impact of the implementation of the Signs of Safety practice model and the focus on strengths based assessments has also decreased the proportion of strategy discussions, section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences. By focussing on **family strengths** we were able to clearly **evidence risk reduction** which in conjunction with consistent and strengthened workforce arrangements and greater **management oversight** within the locality safeguarding hubs has enabled children to be removed from the child protection register in a safe and timely manner. The implementation of our supervision policy along with the quality assurance framework provides a mechanism to ensure learning continues to be implemented and reviewed.

We established a local multi-agency exploitation panel which meets on a monthly basis. The panel is made up of members from 15 key agencies, who, discuss on average, between 10 and 15 cases per panel. The regional approach is currently being agreed, and a pan Wales exploitation exchange and best practice forum is being developed to further support the work around exploitation. During 2023/24 we received 118 reports, where exploitation was a factor, in respect of 80 children or young people.

To ensure the recommendations from the **Public Law Outline (PLO)** working group reforms are **embedded** in our operating models, training has been delivered and cascaded to relevant parts of the organisation with its guidance and principles now being followed in the operating models. Work has also been completed to ensure consistency across the Local Family Justice Board region. We have developed a system to monitor the impact of the PLO with Team Manager's and legal colleagues reporting a reduction in cases. In June 2023

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there were approximately 10-15 legal gateway meetings per week which indicated that children were escalating through the system and into the PLO process. Currently there are approximately 3 legal gateway meetings per week. We believe this is due the implementation of a case consultation process which has allowed us to slow down our thinking and have an opportunity to reflect on the safety plans for the family. This approach has led to a reduction in applications to court for all orders.

Signs of Safety: A Case Study

Within the IAA team, practitioners are using Signs of Safety mapping within their assessments to help identify the worries, strengths and safety goals.

It is essential that views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are gathered. Below is an anonymised example of the creative way workers in IAA are communicating with children and find out who is important in their life.



when we discussed how the children were feeling about the situation. Most importantly the children enjoyed this task, it was an engaging piece of work, particularly when trying to relationship build and it ensured the child's wishes and feelings were clearly heard within the assessment.'

The practitioner who completed this piece of direct work commented – 'The direct work I completed with the children provided me with a clear understanding of who and what mattered to the children. I also took this piece of work out and shared it with the family so they had a visual representation for

Family Safety Circles
By Susie Essex



As Signs of Safety is the Practice Framework which is strengths based, solution focussed and safety orientated and using the principle of every family has strength, it promotes a relationship based

Children and Family Services

approach with children, young people, their parents or carers ensuring 'nothing about you, without you'. Working on the principle that families are the experts in their lives, it is essential that Family Meetings are held as soon as possible. Practitioners are the Facilitators not the Fixers, therefore family are encouraged to involve their wider network in developing the family support plan through a family network meeting.

When the assessment confirms that there are worries about a child, a family network meeting must be arranged at the earliest point and is attended by the people who are naturally connected to the child and their family. Using family finding tools and family meetings practitioners begin supporting the family to develop their own safety plan.

The Practitioner commented that the family meeting ' was an excellent tool, it enabled the family to take ownership of the worries and to plan what they will do if there any bumps in the road. With a network meeting everyone was aware of the worries and what the plan was, and it also meant the full responsibility would not end with me.

Family time needed to be supervised for the children and this plan enabled the family to do this in a natural way as and when it suited everyone without asking me questions about what they could and couldn't do, it put the family in control. As a result, I felt confident that everyone was aware of the worries and how to manage them and the family could move the plan forward with support from the social worker in the locality team.'

Once cases transfer from IAA to safeguarding teams, for some more in depth support, Practitioners continue to use the Signs of Safety Mapping within Core Group where scaling allows the family to chart the progress they are making. A Health Visitor attending the core group commented – 'It was refreshing having the family lead the exercise...This approach highlights the families are the ones who can complete the changes for their own safety

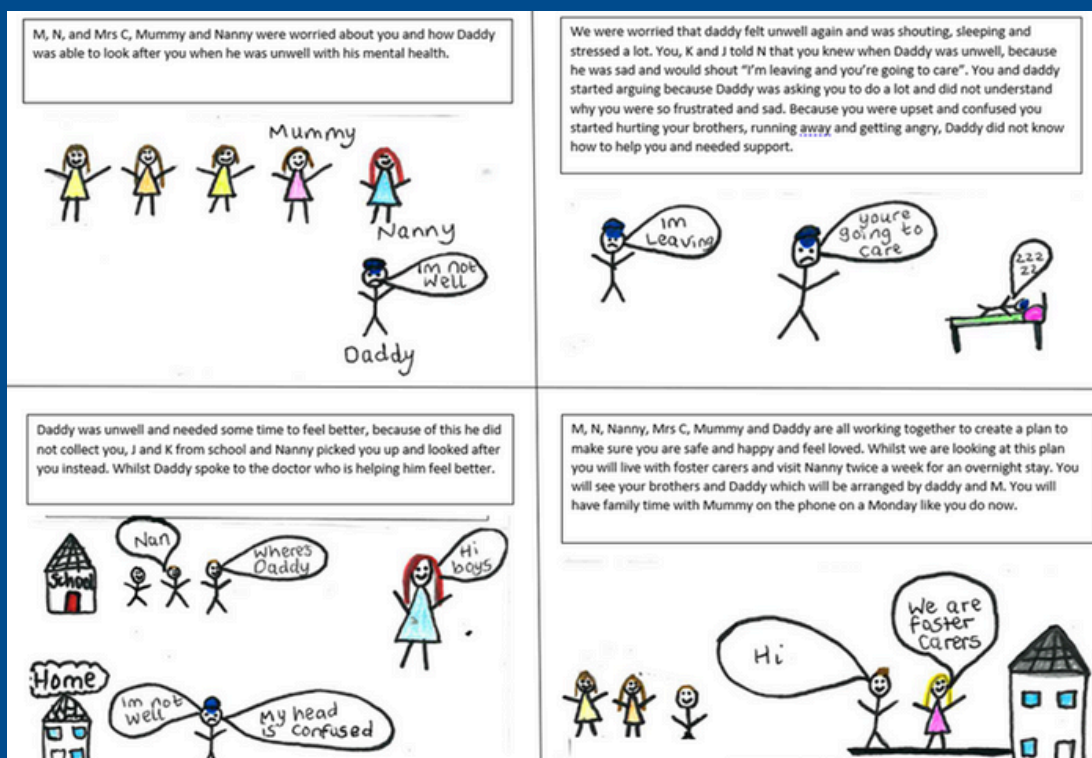
Children and Family Services

and reduce the danger.’ A Health Visitor attending the core group commented – ‘It was refreshing having the family lead the exercise... This approach highlights the families are the ones who can complete the changes for their own safety and reduce the danger.’

Words and Pictures is another new tool offered by Signs of Safety. Words and Pictures is a tool used to explain to Children and Young People what is happening and the worries from the assessment. Using stick people drawings, Practitioners must draft Words and Pictures and share them with the family to agree a final draft.

Parents will then share this with their children with the support of the Social Worker, as it is important the children hear from their parents as to why Children’s Social Care are involved.

Below is an example of an anonymised words and pictures that was shared with a child to explain why they needed to stay with a foster carer while their father was unwell due to mental health.

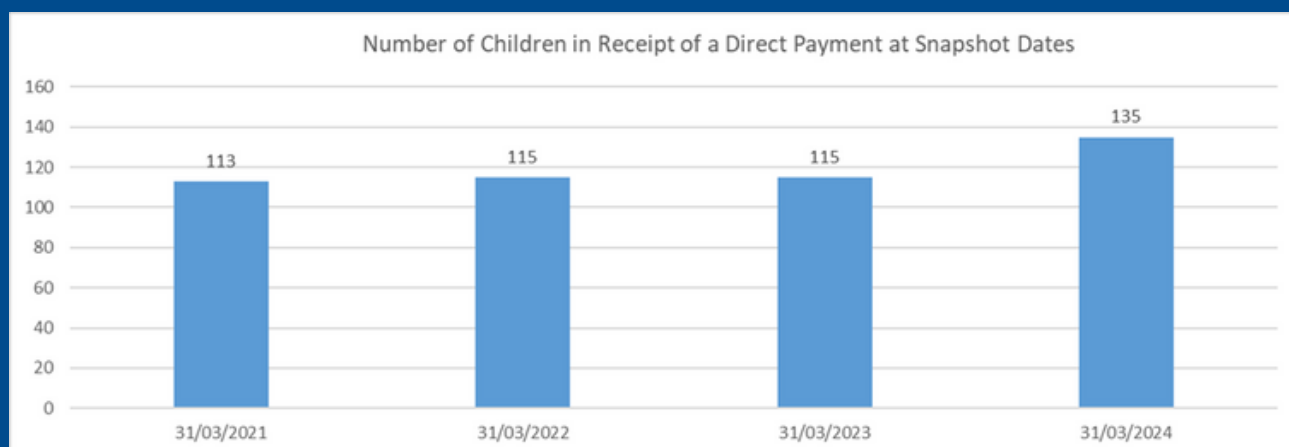


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The Practitioner from the safeguarding team commented on how the words and pictures helped the family – ‘Using a signs of safety approach exploring words and pictures with the family and mapping helped us keep things simple and broke down the barriers of communication with the family. Parents were able to understand our worries and see what the risks were for their family. Parents worked with us to create words and pictures to explain the situation and safety plan to the children in a child friendly way using words they would understand. Parents felt empowered and supported by this piece of work and were able to share it with the children. The children went from confused and upset to understanding what was happening for them, the reasons why this was happening and had less questions about it. Whilst working in this way with families they have shared “we feel listened too and wish this could have been used with us sooner, it has made a difference and is easy to understand and know what is expected of us”.’

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

The directorate’s **Direct Payment Policy** has been **implemented** and provides a new more flexible approach. The project group continues to meet on a fortnightly basis to develop and implement operational guidance, which will be concluded over the next year.



Children and Family Services

A celebration event was held in September 2023 for young people's achievements in education, training and employment. This was supported by the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Deputy Minister for Social Services and a range of Welsh Government Officials. An achievement awards event is planned Autumn 2024 for all care experienced children, young people and care leavers. Below are some photographs from the event.



Using Shared Prosperity Funding, we have **appointed a Multiply Engagement and Skills Project Officer** to support young people aged 19 and over to **develop** their **numeracy** skills.

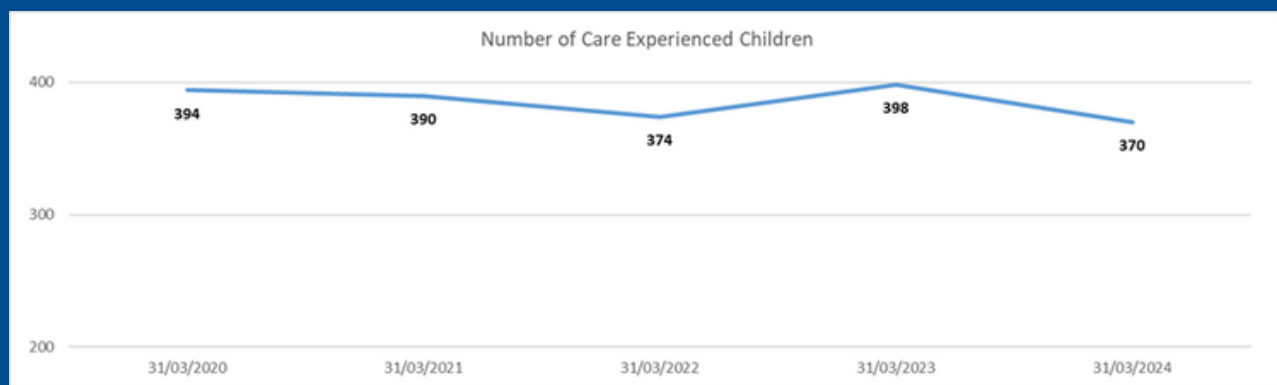
To further **improve outcomes** for care experienced children and young people key partner agencies are represented on the Corporate Parenting Board. These outcomes include, improving personal education plans to align with individual development plans, improving school attendance and reducing the number of care experienced children and young people with a reduced timetable.

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

Our **care experienced children reduction strategy** was implemented in April 2023 and has been supported throughout the year by a number of focussed activities. These activities

Children and Family Services

along with a number of targets support the framework for the safe reduction of care experienced children with their progress being monitored by the Social Services Improvement Board. The effectiveness of the strategy continues to be monitored over the next year.



Following a successful application for grant funding, we have commenced the implementation of the placement support service, to ensure the right multi-agency therapeutic input for children, young people and their carers. Whilst we were unable to commission an organisation to support us in providing this support the grant funding has enabled us to develop an in-house service and a board has been established to oversee its development.

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

The **children's assessment hub** 'Meadow's View / Golygfa'r Dolyddl' has been **completed** and provision commenced. The provision has enabled children and young people previously placed in external residential care to return to this in-house service enabling us to become less resilient on external services.

We continue to work with **Foster Wales** and now have a dedicated **Recruitment Officer** in place with a number of recruitment activities taking place throughout the year. In

Children and Family Services

January 2024, a national campaign to increase the number of foster carers was launched, supported by public relations, television, radio, digital and physical activation. This was further supported in Bridgend town centre with the mural and 3 to 4 pop-up events per month across the borough to enable members of the public to access meet and greet sessions.

Despite efforts there are continued challenges recruiting and retaining carers to meet our sufficiency needs. Within Bridgend we have an aging carer population and most carers who have ceased fostering over the past year have done so owing to age or health related issues, followed by family commitments. We have not lost any fostering households to the independent fostering sector in the past year which is positive and there are some households who have ceased fostering in order to provide a permanent home to children they were looking after by obtaining a Special Guardianship Order. National challenges related to costs of living and research tells us that the average person takes 7 years to decide to foster before making an application. We are reviewing the offer to foster carers to promote additional recruitment and retention. We are seeking to embed the Foster Carers Charter within the local authority, enhance our learning and development of foster carers and continue to work with local partners to increase the number of businesses operating foster friendly policies.

To ensure there is sufficient provision for children and young people with complex needs, the RPB regional children's board have agreed an ambition to develop a regional residential accommodation facility for children and young people with complex emotional wellbeing needs. To support this, three project managers are being sought to work with partners to develop facilities across the Cwm Taf region; one will focus on children's residential accommodation, and the other two will be available to support the findings in the 10-year Regional Capital Strategy.

Children and Family Services

Case Study: Meadows View Approach

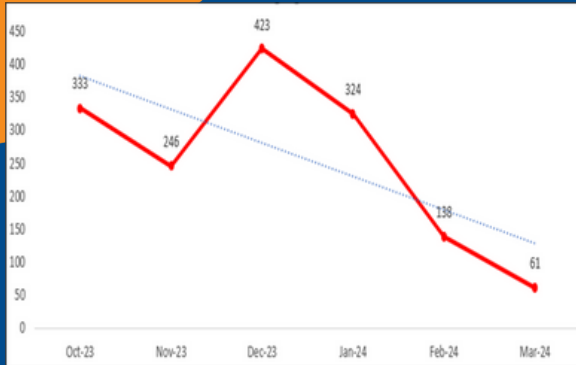
Meadows View opened in September 2023 and consists of an emergency and assessment unit. The assessment unit provides a safe and therapeutic home for up to four children and young people. Meadows View adopts a Trauma Informed approach that is underpinned by behavioural science and attachment theory. When children move to Meadows View the first six weeks is used to assess their therapeutic and care needs. A detailed report is produced which outlines a plan for caring for the child whilst they live at Meadows View; this includes recommendations about what therapy is needed, what parenting style would meet their needs, and what skills they would benefit from developing that will support them in the future. All staff are trained in a model of Trauma Informed parenting and provide a level of compassionate and therapeutic care.

X's Story so far...

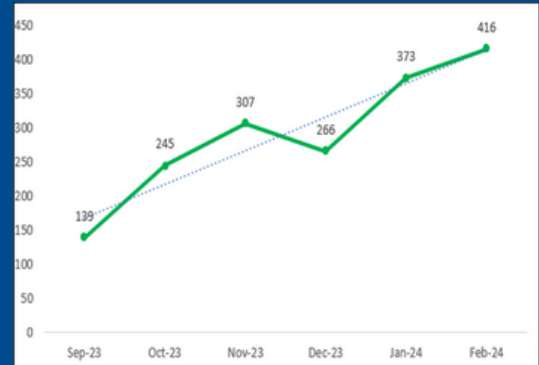
X has been known to Social Services for a number of years. Prior to moving to Meadows View they several placement breakdowns with carers reporting difficulties with managing behaviour. X has experienced several Adverse Childhood Experience's (ACE's). Since moving to Meadows View in September the team have been working with X on building their emotional understanding, learning to communicate their wants and needs, forming trusting relationships with adults, and therapy to help them explore and process their trauma. X has made great progress in all areas.



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This graph depicts behaviours that are deemed as **challenging** per month displayed by X. A steep downward trend can be seen since arriving at Meadows View.



This graph depicts behaviours that are deemed as **positive** per month displayed by X. An upward trend can be seen since arriving at Meadows View.

Children and Family Services

Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.	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
Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	Develop an updated commissioning strategy for family support services ensuring children and families access the right support from the right service at the right time.
Quality Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm	Agree and implement a single Programme of shared priorities with partners for children in the County Borough.
Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society	Establish arrangements to ensure that senior health, education, housing, NHS and partners work with children's social care services strategically and operationally.
Quality Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy, domestic, family and personal relationships	Working with key colleagues within BCBC, commission services and help shape the market in response to the findings of the early help commissioning strategy that is being developed.
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	Work with regional partners in Cwm Taf Morgannwg to ensure there is sufficient quantity and quality of flexible provision for children whose needs cannot be met in standards residential or fostering provision.

5. Prevention and Wellbeing

During 2023/24, the Prevention and Wellbeing Service saw a growth in the range of programmes being developed to support both children and adults not only in community settings but in new and innovative ways.

The successful **Feel Good For Life programme** that supports people living with dementia or a cognitive impairment was offered in additional locations and has an online activity helping to attract more participants with referrals from social care and third sector partners. The **carers wellbeing programme** was further developed in partnership with Halo, to provide unpaid carers with the skills and knowledge to manage their wellbeing. We launched the **Carers Wellbeing Support Service** to provide advice and assistance and connect unpaid carers to community based support. This service was co-designed with unpaid carers and a new **partnership** to deliver the service was established with TuVida.



To support more people with reduced needs for more formal services across the borough the service expanded the number of **local community co-ordinators** to 6 working in **partnership** with BAVO's team of 5 community navigators. This has resulted in more people being provided with the information they need and

Prevention and Wellbeing

connected to their communities. By the end of the year, 237 people were being supported by a local community co-ordinator and through the BAVO partnership over 200 community opportunities were identified to connect people to alternatives to services.

The Prevention and Wellbeing Service has led the **Age Friendly** Communities plan that will help to create more cohesive communities and promote inter-generational opportunities. With Welsh Government support there has been a review of the population in regards to the 8 domains of the World Health Organisations framework that includes transport, housing, environment and buildings, civic participation, community support and health services, social participation, respect and social inclusion, communication and information. The findings will support community **engagement** and development of an action plan for stakeholders and **communities**.

The **young carers network** and take up of the young carers ID card has continued to grow with 380 young carers cards and 347 leisure memberships supported. There are 13 **young carer ambassadors** and 154 young carers attended “We are Valued” events. A new preventative referrals programme has been jointly developed with social care teams to help support wellbeing for young people. There have been 84 referrals supported including 31 from the Edge of Care team and 41 from the Disabled Children and Transition Team.

Autism-
Friendly
Swim
Lessons
@
Halo
Leisure



Prevention and Wellbeing

In leisure and cultural services, usage by the public continues to grow, particularly in targeting support to the more vulnerable. Programmes such as the **National Exercise Referral Scheme** are supporting high demand and include support for people living with chronic conditions. There are specific pathways supporting stroke, joint care, pulmonary rehabilitation, cancer, postural stability and more. The autism friendly swimming programme that has been developed with families and stakeholders won two National Swim Wales awards for inclusion and community impact. From a pilot programme of 20 participants in 2018 there are now 221 parents/carers that have registered interest. The scheme has been assessed as delivering £3.33 of social return on investment for every pound invested.

2023/24 Key Achievements

During the year, the Prevention and Wellbeing service **implemented a leisure strategy and option appraisal of contract**. The service engaged a development partner to help progress the next Active Bridgend plan with the commencement of fieldwork, including visits to relevant facilities and connecting with key stakeholders. This exercise will continue during 2024 focussing on leisure centres, pools and how we use the outdoor environment, playing fields, active travel, community use of school facilities and asset transfer. The need for a One Council approach to wellbeing outcomes had been identified in a previous Wales Audit Office review.

To support the roll out of **local community co-ordination across the borough** the service recruited 3 additional posts. The new posts are based in the south of the borough, and have focused on building connections within their communities and with partners who can support referral processes. There is continued partnership working with BAVO and the community navigator roles to align people with those services that can best support their level of need.

Prevention and Wellbeing

There has been **continued work with the long term partners**, Halo Leisure and Awen, on preventative activities and opportunities **to continue to focus and support the most vulnerable**. The service has also worked with BAVO, the Alzheimer's Society, Cwmpas and Cruse to support local people. Shared Prosperity fund investment has enabled further work to be undertaken to support vulnerable young people in community settings by connecting them to community groups. This has included young carers, care experienced young people and children with disabilities or additional needs.

We have **worked with corporate colleagues to understand options to address energy financial risks**. Work has progressed to understand more cost effective ways of funding energy through longer term contracted partnerships and further advice is being sought on any legal considerations. There have been a range of investments to support reduction in energy usage including LED lighting, building energy management systems, improved heating systems and insulation. Further work is progressing on opportunities for further investment into energy efficiency measures.

Promoting and Improving the Wellbeing of those we help

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

We **continue to work with people living with dementia or cognitive impairment and carers to co-design services and opportunities** and held a number of sessions to identify the range of community based support available. Opportunities to support wellbeing are being delivered in line with the national dementia standards with support in place for the provision of information, advice and assistance as well as bespoke support and other opportunities to integrate into more universal activities. By working with Cwmpas a new social innovation approach was implemented to work with unpaid carers in

Prevention and Wellbeing

in regard to short breaks to maintain resilience and review how information and advice is being made available.

Investment to increase the knowledge and skills of co-production amongst our workforce and teams with key staff attending a range of training events and then supported with opportunities to apply this learning in the delivery of support programmes. This practical approach is highly valued and effective, enabling the service to utilise co-production to shape and design community led networks, activities and opportunities. The Prevention and Wellbeing team and third sector network groups and partnerships will further adopt this approach in regards to support for older adults, people with disabilities, unpaid carers, people with autism spectrum disorder and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The design of the new **Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service** has strengthened **engagement with unpaid carers to connect them to community based support**. The service responded to the views of unpaid carers and has seen high levels of demand with many being able to access the information they need within the community and via the third sector. The volumes of people requesting further support, including full carers assessments, has been relatively small. The overall picture as to how and where unpaid carers are getting their support needs met is being tracked within quarterly performance reviews.

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

To identify how direct payment based approaches can support people to have more voice and control in regard to their wellbeing, the directorate has developed a new more flexible approach. We have reviewed and updated our policy to enable people to use their direct payments more broadly to maintain their individual wellbeing. As this is in the early stage of implementation, opportunities to use such an approach more

Prevention and Wellbeing

creatively will be reviewed as this work progresses. The Connecting Carers programme in partnership with Cwmpas has been identifying how more collaborative approaches involving the pooling of resources could be further progressed. This has included connecting with unpaid carers based on their lived experience as part of a social innovation approach. The partnership with TuVida has also seen local unpaid carers benefit from 127 grants to support carer wellbeing via short breaks investments.

To **rebuild and expand capacity to support people to live well in their communities**, support for community navigator roles has continued **with over 200 community anchor organisations and partners** supporting the diverse needs that were presented. There has been specific investment in developing volunteer skills to sustain the third sector and also supporting community groups to tackle loneliness and isolation through new approaches. Links between partner organisations and the directorate's Common Access Point supported triage to meet people's needs in community settings.

Young Adult Group Achieve Success!!!

As part of our Young Adult group sessions based within the Prevention and Wellbeing services, we consulted with our Young Adult group to discuss opportunities individuals would like to participate in.

Our young adults expressed interest in training and opportunities to enhance their progress with life skills, Independence and possible future employment or studies.

Working In partnership with Maxine Barratt, Engagement and Marketing Team Co Ordinator within Employability, five disabled young adults undertook their QA Award in food safety level 1 with support from members of our staff team, with training provided by CCE Training Services.

Clare Caddy Edmunds, who facilitated the training stated, "I'm

Prevention and Wellbeing



so glad they all enjoyed themselves whilst learning new skills, you were all a joy to train.”

We undertook the training at an evening session and learned new skills as well as being able to participate and contribute to the session with some very interesting observations and feedback!

The group worked hard and focused on topics which they had not considered previously such as correct procedures for food preparation, recognising hazards within the kitchen environment, awareness of allergies etc.

Congratulations to all in passing their QA Award in Food Safety Level 1.

We are now looking to the future and other training which will provide our young adults with the opportunity to learn, participate and achieve in their chosen courses.

Well done all!!!!

Wellbeing Manager Play and Family Support. Prevention and Wellbeing

Over the year we have continued to build on our partnerships with third sector organisations to **increase our engagement in regard to people with diverse needs to shape and develop community based opportunities**. Our continued partnership with Bavo has further developed networks to support carer wellbeing, mental health, food security, children and families and health, social care and wellbeing. We also worked in partnership with

Prevention and Wellbeing

Bridgend Inclusive Network Group (BING) to support children and young people with disabilities and their households to have more voice and choice in the opportunities that matter to them.

The young carers network has been led by young adult carers with lived experience who help design opportunities for and with others and provide peer support.



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

We reviewed key population information including significant findings from the population needs assessment to help **progress** a baseline assessment in line with the 8 domains of the WHO **Age Friendly Communities Framework**. In line with a **one council collaborative approach** BCBC produced its own Age Friendly Communities survey for residents. A draft action plan on areas of focus will be created and this will support engagement with stakeholders in 2024-25. There has been **positive work continuing with the older persons forum** and a range of community programmes developed.

In line with the new **National Dementia standards** an **approach to supporting people living with dementia or cognitive impairment has been developed** including a stronger interface with social work practice and the needs of adult social care. A newly specified service has been developed, supported by RIF funding and includes community opportunities. This will see the

Prevention and Wellbeing

partnership working with the Alzheimer's Society continue to grow.

To develop the next stage of the Connecting Carers programme Cwmpas have engaged with stakeholders on the key challenges being faced and have identified IAA and carer resilience via short breaks as areas for attention. A new social innovation approach including unpaid carers and a broader range of stakeholders who can support **innovative practice has commenced** with a network group in place. A 12 month programme is in place for 2024/25 that will test new approaches.

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

There has been **growth** in the **collaborative links between social work practice and more community based support opportunities to meet the needs of vulnerable people** in different ways. The benefits of joint working across sectors has become more visible, with some people seeing some or all of their needs being met outside more formal services. There are specific examples linked to dementia and cognitive impairment, physical and mental wellbeing improvements, support for carers and households with children and young people with additional needs, This work has continued to develop partnership approaches with the third sector.

The **Bridgend Community Transport** programme continues to offer the Town Rider scheme that **supports day opportunities and broader social activity engagement**. The service supports access to partner led activities such as Feel Good for Life and local community co-ordinator initiatives also. Transport is however still identified as a significant barrier to engagement. **Work has commenced on identifying opportunities for integrated health and social care community hubs** with a regional review commissioned by RPB. The use of **digital approaches** has continued in the Feel Good for Life programme, developing skills and confidence amongst carers and including equipment loans.

Prevention and Wellbeing

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

1249 unpaid carers have been supported by the carers wellbeing service and are being provided with relevant information and advice with proportionate assessments being conducted in the community. Only 70 unpaid carers have sought referral for full carer assessment and 3571 instances of additional signposted to broader support available in the community. The **collaborative working between community support and social care services continues to develop to understand and develop** appropriate pathways for carers.

Joint working between children and family services, and the healthy living service area has seen a new “step up step down ” approach created where teams can refer individuals or families to a range of wellbeing support opportunities. Individuals or families are assessed via a tiered approach which correlates to the level of support/intervention they require. The approach involves utilising activities geared towards improving wellbeing, with the aim of **transitioning individuals and families onto a Community Pathway**. Work continues to develop with local groups, community, and 3rd sector organisations to build capacity to provide for our most vulnerable, ensuring the breadth of inclusive needs are considered when designing a programme, activity or session – i.e., trauma informed and disability confident.

The evidence is suggesting this is well received and supporting many personal improvements that are creating benefits in other aspects of daily life also.

84 PREVENTATIVE REFERRALS



- 41 Child Disability & Transition Team
- 31 Edge of Care Team
- 6 Care Experienced Team (1 of which in residential)
- 6 Locality Hubs (4 North, 1 East, 1 West)

160 number of individuals supported

64 number of families supported

6 Community partnerships developed

Prevention and Wellbeing

I just wanted to let you know that X's mum Y was so positive about your Discovery Days for X and could not compliment your personally enough. Thank you for your support with this family, it's made a really positive impact.

The Discovery Days service has continued to support children and young people with more complex needs to have social connections and develop life skills and a young adults transition programme has been created also.

Staff represent Bridgend in the regional “foundations and participation” partnership network and the Bridgend network meetings. A range of programmes have been developed and supported for partners to deliver across Bridgend to support families wellbeing and resilience. Pop up Pods activity sessions (holiday times).

SUPPORTING FAMILY WELLBEING & RESILIENCE



- Active Baby at Home 6 week courses
- Prenatal nutrition 6 week course
- Aqua natal sessions run by midwives and halo staff
- Pre and post-natal qualification (10 settings delivering mum and baby sessions)
- Early Years FAZ Bags

Training, mentoring and support have been offered to partners with, Early Years Wales – Active Baby, Active toddler and Active child courses and also pre and post-natal and aqua natal yoga qualifications.

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

The service has successfully **secured Shared Prosperity** investment that has been used to **co-produce opportunities**

Prevention and Wellbeing

amongst our more vulnerable young people and to invest into community network development. These networks are being led by people with lived experience who can co-design support that meets their needs. Examples include young carers, people living with disabilities, people living with dementia and people with chronic conditions. There is also a growth in partnership working with the Older Persons Forum.



We have **developed** a number of **programmes** aimed at **supporting young people to develop their leadership, life and employability skills** alongside giving them opportunities and experiences in a safe environment.

A new leadership plus programme has been developed to support more vulnerable young people and this is being developed in partnership with local schools. A further programme Ascent is supporting people to build skills and confidence beyond school settings and also being piloted in the community. The mainstream leadership pathway is active in every secondary school with two strands to the pathway – Sport and Physical Activity and now includes Wellbeing leaders. A new young leadership programme has been developed in partnership with Youth Sport Trust and will be piloted with primary schools.

Prevention and Wellbeing

The ambassador programme continues to be successful with Sport and Physical activity Ambassadors and now also wellbeing ambassadors.

The Stepping Stone programme is being delivered to young people 16 plus who are not in education, training or employment. A referral network has been developed with internal and external partners to support the referral process onto the programme.

Prevention and Wellbeing

Key Service Priorities for 2024/25

Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co- produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.	Local community co-ordinators to work at the edge of care and support people to reduce their needs for more formal services.
Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	Link with our healthy living and cultural partnerships to increase usage and support by more vulnerable people and groups.
Quality Standard 3: Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm	Work with the third sector and in line with safeguarding considerations of the BCBC volunteering policy to grow community based support.
Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society	Continue to develop and support community led networks where people with lived experience can shape the support they need most.
Quality Standard 5: Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy, domestic, family and personal relationships	Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service to support unpaid carers to get the support that they need in community settings.
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	Continue to work in partnership with BAVO and the third sector to connect people to community opportunities and support.

6. How we work

Workforce

Our workforce are our most valued resource and as highlighted throughout this report the recruitment and retention of the social work and social care workforce continues to have the highest priority in adults and children's social care.

Key Achievements in 2023/24

Good progress is being made in children's social work recruitment with a reduction in agency workers improved retention, successful recruitment including 10 international recruits and some agency workers applying for permanent roles.

As indicated below our **overall** directorate **headcount increased** by approximately 5%. The greatest increase was within children and family services which increased by approximately 19% with the additional recruitment of 45 staff, partially due to improved recruitment of permanent staff and reduction in agency staff. Adult Social Care remained stable with a small decrease 5 staff members.

Service Area	31st March 2023		31st March 2024	
	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount
Adult Social Care	602.09	783	604.64	778
Children's Social Care	189.82	244	245.06	289
Business Support	61.31	64	67.12	71
Prevention & Wellbeing	20.70	28	28.21	33
DIRECTORATE TOTAL	873.92	1119	945.03	1171

As noted below, there has been a significant **improvement in sickness absence** and the impact of focussing on wellbeing and support is evident in the table below with sickness absence decreasing by 34.4%.

How we work

Unit	FTE 31.03.23	QTR4 2022/23			QTR4 2023/24			Cumulative Days per FTE 2022/23	Cumulative Days per FTE 2023/24
		Number of FTE days lost	No. of Absences	Days per FTE	Number of FTE days lost	No. of Absences	Days per FTE		
Adult Social Care	605.66	3207.95	406	5.32	3009.40	357	4.97	23.06	17.00
Business Support - SS&W	67.12	169.51	17	2.76	227.32	16	3.39	9.40	12.15
Children's Social Care	245.06	1162.40	76	6.12	749.70	75	3.06	25.51	10.27
Prevention and Wellbeing	28.21	60.35	2	2.85	24.27	5	0.86	3.41	1.50
Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate Total	946.05	4600.21	501	5.25	4010.69	453	4.24	22.23	14.59

We understand the importance of training and staff development and its impact on the **retention and wellbeing** of our workforce as it builds support, teamwork, trust and respect not only to empower staff but make them feel valued. Throughout 2023/24 a number of training, learning and support events, activities and actions have taken place.

To **increase opportunities for students** at school and further education establishments **to access work experience placements** within social care, students on health and social care courses at the local college have been offered work placements and casual employment opportunities to support their academic studies. We have recruited an **additional workforce development officer to support and assess** the competence of our hosted student social workers

To continue to **support the Social Services Practitioner programme** and work with the **Local Authority Consortium, City and Guilds/WJEC and Further Education Colleges**, 8 social services practitioners are undertaking the SSP (Social Services Practitioner) Qualification, with 3 due to qualify later in 2024. The qualification will be accepted by the Open University Wales as accreditation towards the first year of the Social Work Degree. Bridgend intends to second staff onto the degree programme for entry in the 24/25 academic year.

The Local Authority **continued to work** alongside partner **Higher Education Establishments (HEI's)** on the development of social work degree part-time routes at both undergraduate and post-graduate level.

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In addition to the three social work trainees who have progressed through to the second year of the BSc Social Work at Cardiff Metropolitan University, we have **extended the social work trainee programme** to include the **Master of Social Work degree**, with 5 trainees commencing the programme in the 23/24 academic year.

Other Key Highlights:

Further actions completed to strengthen and develop our workforce are noted below.

- Six staff who work within Adult Social Care direct care services have become WeCare Wales social care Ambassadors. They attend schools, colleges, careers and jobs fairs to help raise the profile of social care.
- The directorate has co-produced, with the Institute of Public Care (IPC), a bespoke management and leadership development program to support managers to develop their skills in leading teams and services. 115 colleagues attended workshops, with positive feedback received '[The session was] informative, encouraging, reflective and a safe space to talk to others in similar positions'.
- Managers have an opportunity to undertake a Management Qualification such as Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) levels 3 & 5 in Leadership and Management and the Post Graduate Certificate in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care.
- The directorate provided 37 statutory practice learning opportunity placements for student social workers, and co-ordinated 1 hosted by an Independent Fostering Agency and 3 within third section organisations.
- We provided a comprehensive programme of induction and support in social worker's first year in practice, which

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includes core training, mentoring and support groups. 12 newly qualified social workers completed their first year in practice and are able to progress onto the Consolidation Programme.

- The Authority has upgraded its learning platform, to improve the learning experience. In addition to easier access and enhanced e-learning content, the system provides individuals and managers with tailored training data.
- A hybrid model applies for delivery of training, with e-learning, on-line resources such as Community Care inform, webinars, on-line facilitated training and in-person courses available.

Priorities for 2024/25

- Continuously improve our recruitment processes, drawing on marketing expertise to enhance campaigns and ensure the most efficient selection processes.
- Ensure learning from all inspection and reviews is systematically embedded through learning, training and development and follow up quality assurance and review.
- Provide programmes of training to support the implementation of practice frameworks across the directorate. Adult social care 'Strength-based model of practice – Working to achieve outcomes' and children social care 'Signs of Safety'.
- Implement our workforce plan and review the impact of the 'Grow Our Own Social Work Programme'.
- Implement our plans to improve the experience of our workforce so they feel consistently well supported and valued, get the right balance of skills and experience in our teams and to retain and recruit a high standard of practitioner to our

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service.

- Deliver and review an ongoing management and leadership development pathway and programme to support all managers in adult social care to develop their skills in leading teams and services.
- Direct care services (BCBC and Independent providers)- to offer and deliver a range of underpinning knowledge and skills sessions to support completion of the core qualification and training areas.
- Develop a bespoke Learning and Development Pathway for Children's Social Care Residential services.

“Signs of Safety Training Events”

As part of the Signs of Safety Practice Implementation within Children's Social Care, all practitioner's within Children's Social Care have been offered training with a Licenced Signs of Safety consultant.



The training consisted of two day training - Risk Assessment and Next Steps training and Five Day – Signs of Safety Approach to create a family safety plan. To date 178 practitioners have attended two day training and 107 have attended five day, with a further 35 practitioners expected to attend five day training in June.

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The training consisted of two day training - Risk Assessment and Next Steps training and Five Day – Signs of Safety Approach to create a family safety plan. To date 178 practitioners have attended two day training and 107 have attended five day, with a further 35 practitioners expected to attend five day training in June.



The photographs included show practitioners attending the training, the Senior management Team who attended Risk Assessment and Next Steps Training.

We all came in with fuzzy heads,
all talking about His mother always being
in bed.
^{used to think}
What should we do? but now we know
we need to involve the family too and get
them to think it through.
Mum & dad weren't doing well
so family needed to include gran, auntie and
even the two dogs too.
We needed to all agree safety goals
and identify all the little holes.
At first it was quite a task,
but in their achievements the family could
bask.
To our trainer we must thank
without you our signs of safety efforts
would have sunk.
Off we go with our tods & plans
and now we are signs of safety biggest
fans!

As part of a group exercise, within the five-day training, practitioners composed a poem.

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A Strengths-based model of practice: working to achieve outcomes

A summary of the introduction of BCBC's model of practice in Adult Social Care 2023/24

1. Context

Back in Spring 2022, the Institute of Public Care was commissioned to assist the directorate to consider its future direction in terms of a defined practice model. Across the directorate, it was agreed that practice should be shaped by:

- How professionals behave.
- What values and principles are important in their work
- How they interact with individuals, families and carers.
- How they interact with colleagues and professional partners
- What techniques and methods are used in their work

The model should describe the key behaviours and activities for practice across the directorate - a common approach based on dignity, respect, within a collaborative relationship. The focus is upon an understanding of people's strengths and abilities, and how these can be harnessed to assist people to achieve their personal wellbeing outcomes.

Adult Social Care has invested in and developed a strength based, outcome focussed approach since the SSWBA was implemented in 2016. From hosting the SSIA pilot of the skills-based training 'Collaborative Conversations' with the West Network Team, a version of this training has since been delivered across Adult Social Care's assessment and care and support

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planning teams.

The approach has been very well received, has proven to be popular, resonates with best practice, and has added direction and energy in reinvigorating how we approach assessment and care and support planning.

It was a logical conclusion to reach by Adult Social Care to continue to build on this position and further embed the principles of practice in the directorate's culture. The contribution of other disciplines in our integrated teams is now embraced so that we seek to achieve consistency of practice and approach whether provided by a nurse, an OT, or a social worker, and of course direct care workers.

The model is consistent with how professionals should behave and approach people we support as presented by the Code of Professional Practice that is the pillar of registration for social workers, and our own social work charter.

The model is not entirely new. The directorate is mainstreaming and embedding best practice as required by the Social Services and Wellbeing Act as described in Part 2 General Duties of that Act.

The model can be placed in this legal framework and whether staff are working under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, the Mental Health (Wales) Measure, or the Mental Capacity Act, the strengths-based, outcome-focussed practice model must be the way to deliver these duties in practice.

2. Purpose of the launch events: 12th April and 6th June (for community teams) and 15th November (for BCBC and independent sector direct care domiciliary care services)

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Managers and staff in Adult Social Care had collaborated to produce the 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.”

The events were arranged as a celebration of practice over many years since the SSWBA was implemented and to acknowledge the progress that has been made in BCBC. That practice is now underpinned by the model and forms a waypoint to support the understanding of the approach to staff working in our multi-disciplinary teams, and to direct care staff within BCBC and across the independent sector. The ambition is to shape a common shared approach to supporting people regardless of the agency been represented or the tasks being delivered.

The model introduced can be used to assist staff with their explanations of what can be expected to those being supported, to assist staff new to BCBC, to assist experienced staff by way of refreshing practice, and to form the basis of future learning and development activity.

3. Target Group – numbers attended

Staff in our multi-disciplinary teams, regardless of profession: 12th April – 65 attended, 6th June – 60 attended

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Profession/Job Role	Number
Social work (includes GMs,TMs, SPs Agency, Student SW)	60
Social Work Assistants/SCO	18
Occupational Therapy (including Manager)	12
SCWDP	7
Project Officer/Policy Officer	4
Dementia Support worker	3
Rehab Officers (sensory)	3
Community Coordinator	3
District Nurse	3
Care Navigator	2
Dietician	2
Physiotherapist	2
S.A.L.T	1
Direct Care Manager	2
Total Declared	122

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Direct care staff: 15th November – 45 attended

Agency	Number
BCBC (Supported Living, Extra Care, Domiciliary Care, Senior Management)	26
Independent Provider (6 Agencies represented)	13
BCBC Commissioning	3
Total Declared	42

4. Example of comments received from evaluations:

Interesting ClearPractical Empowering UsefulValuable Inspiring Thought-provoking

5. How we are Embedding the Model in Practice

- Staff to be invited to present a case study at the beginning of each Continuous Improvement Group meeting that reflects the model of practice.
- Induction Framework to be reviewed to include practice models.
- First Year in Practice (Consolidation Route, New Starters, Social Service Practitioners also to be invited)— Workshops on the model in the FYIP programme to be delivered

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- Delivered three courses for leaders of practice (managers, snr. practitioners) to enable them to better support/mentor their staff to deliver the model in practice and how to evaluate how it is being delivered.
- Re-design a skills-based course to build on the former Collaborative Communications course – to include communication skills, strengths based/outcome focussed approach, engaging with families, diversity and inclusion, challenging conversations, working in communities. This course will be open for multi-disciplinary staff working in BCBC teams. For delivery from April – July 2024 (6 courses)
- Engagement with Independent Care Sector and BCBC Direct Care. An event for direct care providers was held in Civic on the 22nd November 2023 attended by 45 people representing BCBC and independent sector domiciliary care services. This event introduced the model to providers.
- Further opportunities to work in partnership with providers will be developed in 2024 The ambition is to shape a shared approach to supporting people regardless of the agency been represented or the tasks being delivered.
- Community Care Inform has included the Practice Model and related content within its bespoke BCBC pages.
- Reviewed Supervision Policy, Case Recording Policy, and Quality Assurance Framework now established as vehicles for supporting delivery of the model in practice. Training has also been delivered.
- Review and populate Adult Social Care pages on the Intranet. -in progress.

How we work

Financial Resources

In 2023/24 the directorate has continued to experience unprecedented service and financial pressures in meeting statutory duties with a backdrop of a continued exponential increase in demand in Children and Family Services which impacts on the workforce required and a further increase in the number of independent residential placements in Children and Family Services. Alongside this, there continues to be pressures in learning disabilities, mental health, physical disabilities and older people's services driven by increase in cost and complexity of need. The net budget for the directorate for 2023/24 was £99.386 million and the actual outturn was £111.213 million following planned draw down of £5.660 million from earmarked reserves, resulting in an over spend of £11.827 million. The over spend has decreased since the projected over spend reported at quarter 3 of £12.584 million. This is mainly due to the full draw down in quarter 4 of the £2.5 million earmarked reserve as part of the Children's Services sustainability plan.

The main reasons for the £11.827 million over spend are:-

- The directorate has continued to experience both service and financial pressures in meeting statutory duties with a backdrop of a continued exponential increase in demand in Children's social care which impacts on the workforce required and a further increase in the number of independent residential placements in Children's services. This includes a small number of placements at any time which are Operating Without Registration (OWR). Given the additional risks of children living in settings without the protection accorded by regulation, these placements are risk managed and have higher staff ratios, which drive the cost of the service. A 3 year sustainability plan to improve the way that children and families are supported in Bridgend was agreed 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

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earmarked reserves whilst a more permanent funding solution was sought.

The £2.5 million earmarked reserve was drawn down in full during quarter 4 against Children's Social Care Commissioning and Social Work and Management and Administration budgets.

- Council approved £2.5 million as the balance of the £3.5 million budget pressure on the 28th February as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28. This permanent budget pressure for 2024/25 replaces the temporary earmarked reserve funding draw down in 2023/24. Progress is being made with implementing the plan, particularly to progress the steady and safe reduction of agency workforce, through improved retention and recruitment of a permanent workforce, including international recruits. A new emergency residential assessment service has been opened and is avoiding the costs of additional placements. However, even one additional placement can have massive budgetary implications meaning, despite progress, spend has been contained, rather than reduced.
- There continues to be pressures in learning disabilities and older people's services driven by the complexity of need. The Social Services Improvement Board is overseeing a number of actions to address the growth in the adult services budget. These include accelerating the work to transform learning disabilities. An independent review highlighted the need to invest to save to 'right size and right price' care packages to support people to live as independently as possible. Also to support people to retain and regain independence, a target of 80% of all assessments where long term care and support at home is indicated to go through short term service including enabling and reablement has been set. The pathways between care and support and preventative services to maximise the opportunity for people to have wellbeing outcomes met through community connection and resources in their community. Further actions for 2024/25 are being developed into a 3 year service and financial strategic plan for adult services to be

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considered by Cabinet in Autumn 2024.

- Council approved £1.970 million towards the increased costs of home care for adults with learning disabilities and £1 million towards additional residential/nursing placement costs due to new admissions for older people and older people with mental health needs as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28.

Whilst there are pressures funded in the 2024/25 budget being proposed to Council these do not cover all areas of underlying pressures which is evident in the overspend. The areas where pressures are being addressed are children's services workforce, homes for older people and learning disability homecare. The pressure in children's placements could not be addressed through recurring budget within the resources available to the Council. There is a significant transformation programme underway across the directorate to fundamentally change operating models, practice and commissioning in light of the financial context. There remains significant risk, and requirement for close monitoring of the social services and wellbeing budget given the level of demand, high cost of services and reduction in specific grants which had for many years underpinned the directorate budget. The Council remains committed to meeting statutory duties in social care but the costs of so doing are outweighing the finances available causing huge challenge in determining how to balance statutory duties in 2024/25.

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 2023/24.

Partnership, Governance & Accountability

Partnerships

How we work

Partnership and multi-agency working continues to be integral in supporting the delivery of our services. At a regional level the directorate continues to work closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, Merthyr County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to form the RPB. The directorate is also a member of the RSB 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.

“Can I take this opportunity to thank your team for the below feedback. . I appreciate getting here has not been easy and Children Services have unique work force pressures, which require strong leadership to mitigate and sustain the current operating model. The below feedback highlights not only an effective model of colocation, something I believe we should aspire to across the region, but a healthy relationship and culture which in my view are a bi-product of colocation. You will have been present in the MASH exec group meeting where it became clear that not all agree that this is the direction to follow. I will persist in using Bridgend as a case study and advocating for this model. I also acknowledge however that there is much to do, and look forward to those opportunities.

For reassurance I know that healthy professional challenge still exists, but I believe the data is evidencing the efficacy of the processes we have.

Sorry for contributing to a probably endless inbox, but felt it would be remiss of me not to comment on some really good partnership work.”

Detective Superintendent, South Wales Police

How we work

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.

Governance & Accountability

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 Committee, chaired by the Deputy Leader, 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 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](#).

Mwy na Geiriau / More Than Just Words

How we work

“Mwy Na Geiriau / More Than Just Words” is a strategic framework produced by Welsh Government and along with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 promotes Welsh language and culture in Social Services, Social Care and Health across Wales. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 further strengthens the support of the Welsh language by ensuring that Social Services across Wales promote the “Active Offer”. This means that we actively provide services in the Welsh language without someone having to ask.

Of the assessments completed during 2023/24 within Adult Social Care, 74 evidenced the active offer, whilst in Children and Family Services 88% evidenced the active offer. Overall 46 people took up the active offer.

To continue to promote the Welsh language and ensure our systems accurately reflect the active offer, we have developed an action plan for the directorate. The action plan will support us in continuing to promote and roll out awareness of the active offer in line with the “Mwy Na Geiriau / More Than Just Words” framework.