

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10 JANUARY 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>A 3 YEAR SUSTAINABILITY PLAN TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES IN BRIDGEND  MID YEAR (2) REPORT ON PROGRESS - 2024/25</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA KINSEY HEAD OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>The 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for children and families in Bridgend was approved by Council in the autumn of 2023. This report outlines progress against milestones and actions within the year 2 action plan for improvement in Children's Social Care Services within Bridgend County Borough Council between April – September 2024.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the service progress against milestones identified for improvement within the sustainability plan to improve outcomes for Children and Family Services in Bridgend 2024/25 as at the end of September 2024. The Action Plan is found at **Appendix 1**.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Although the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement check which took place in November 2022, recognised progress since the 'serious concerns' that were identified in the Performance Evaluation Inspection undertaken in May 2022, it was clear that services for children and families continued to require improvement to be sustainable and achieve better outcomes for children and families.

2.2 The analysis undertaken by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) identified that a number of things needed to change for sustainable improvement including:

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

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

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

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

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

3.1 The Action Plan is split into the following key themes:

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

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

3.3 A number of key metrics are included in the Action Plan associated with the relevant theme.

3.4 Of the 42 actions in the plan for this period 18 have been completed and we are making good progress with 7. However, although significant work and progress has been made within the service and with key partners including across the regional footprint, a number of areas are still not fully implemented and/or embedded. Those we would categorise as only achieving adequate or unsatisfactory progress include the following areas:

- Further strengthening an embedding of the Quality Assurance (QA) framework
- Finalising our parents charter and achieving more consistent engagement with children and young people across agencies
- Review of our supervision policy and underpinning systems
- Development of the updated commissioning strategy for family support services
- Work with regional partners to ensure sufficient quantity and quality of provision for children whose needs cannot be met in standard residential or fostering provision
- Work with Foster Wales to recruit enough foster carers within the local authority and enhance the support offer to carers
- The risk to being able to deliver social care services safely if a replacement system is not fully implemented in a timely way

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

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

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

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

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

Collaboration	The plan identifies areas where improvements to working collaboratively with a range of partners and working regionally can benefit the lives of children and families within Bridgend County Borough.
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## **6. Climate Change Implications**

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

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

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

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 The 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for Children and Family Services in Bridgend was approved by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023, with a budget virement of £1 million approved for Children's Services and the additional use of up to £2.5 million of earmarked reserves whilst a more permanent funding solution was sought.
- 8.2 Council approved £2.5 million as the balance of the £3.5 million budget pressure on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28, £2 million for Social Services and Well-being and £500k for Education and Family Support.

## **9. Recommendation**

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

## **Background documents**

None