

Meeting of:	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	12 MARCH 2026
Report Title:	UPDATE REPORT: THE LEARNING DISABILITY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR - SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	SHAGUFTA KHAN SOCIAL WORK LEAD
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Learning Disability Service Transformation programme which was reported to the Extraordinary Meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 in December 2023.</p> <p>The report will set out the background which led to the Transformation Programme, provide a summary of the activity undertaken, detail the impact to date and make recommendations for the continuation of the programme.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline to the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee an update on the Learning Disability Transformation Programme within Adult Social Care. It combines a narrative account of the service transformation and achievements to date.
- 1.2 The report demonstrates how the Council has moved from an unsustainable financial position in 2022–23 to a significantly improved and controlled position in 2024–25, while strengthening professional practice and commissioning oversight.

2. Background

Strategic Context and Rationale for Change

- 2.1 In 2022–23, the Adult Services Learning Disability budget recorded an overspend of £3.672 million which was unsustainable. Cost pressures were driven by:
- Increasing complexity of need
 - High-cost supported living and residential placements
 - Growth in 2:1 support arrangements
 - Limited systematic reassessment of high-cost packages
 - Market inflationary pressures.
- 2.2 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) commissioned an independent assessment of our Learning Disability Services in 2019. These were undertaken by Alder Consulting and updated in 2023. This evidenced that expenditure had reached a “tipping point”. Without clear direction and action, the service was not supporting people to maximise their independence and overspends were projected to escalate further.
- 2.3 The 2023 Assessment recommended a structured transformation approach built on:
- Re-embedding the Progression Model of social work practice
 - Outcome-focused, strengths-based assessment
 - Stronger brokerage and commissioning discipline
 - Strategic workforce investment to constrain budget growth
- 2.4 In response, the Learning Disability Transformation Programme was formally launched in December 2023. Details of the Transformation Plan were presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 on 6 December 2023.

3. Current Situation/Proposal

2024–25 Transformation Delivery and Financial Impact

- 3.1 The 2024–25 year marked the first full year of structured transformation delivery. Each workstream within the programme worked against projected financial achievements, with every workstream exceeding financial targets for both cost avoidance and cashable savings.

Below is the breakdown of achievement of each workstreams:

Outcome Focused Assessment Workstream

- 3.2 Three Senior Social Work Practitioners delivered targeted reassessments of the highest-cost care packages across:

- External supported living
- Residential placements
- Independent domiciliary care

Original projection (March 2024–April 2025):

- 46 reassessments
- £670,000 projected full-year reduction in costs

Actual delivery:

- 63 reassessments completed
- £1,066,250 full-year reduction in costs

Savings were realised through:

- Reduction in 2:1 and 1:1 staffing where progression evidenced
- Review and reduction of waking night support
- Step-down from higher-cost provision
- Rightsizing of supported living arrangements

3.3 This work demonstrated strong proof of concept for two dedicated posts. However, more importantly, reassessments were conducted using strengths-based, outcome-focused methodology to ensure care remained proportionate and maximised individual's independence.

Continuing Healthcare (CHC) Specialist Function

3.4 A CHC specialist function was introduced in 2024, through the appointment of one dedicated Senior Social Work Practitioner to:

- Identify individuals who met triggers for a NHS Continuing Healthcare assessment
- Ensure correct funding allocation
- Upskill workforce in CHC assessments and processes

2024–25 outcomes:

- 9 CHC assessments completed
- £155,575 full year reduction in costs

3.5 This workstream ensures that individuals have their legal entitlement to Continuing Healthcare upheld, in addition to ensuring that the Local Authority does not assume costs that should be the responsibility of the Local Health Board.

Specialist Complex Care Brokerage

- 3.6 A new specialist brokerage function was introduced to strengthen scrutiny of high-cost placements and ensure value for money.
- 3.7 This model ensures:
- Least restrictive placements are prioritised
 - Market engagement is widened
 - Provider costs are negotiated robustly
 - Placement decisions are evidence-based

2024–25 impact:

- 9 brokerage cases reviewed
 - £124,230 full year cost avoidance
- 3.8 This workstream has strengthened commissioning scrutiny and contract management, provided quality assurance over specialist placements, and as a result has resulted in cost avoidance for specialist residential placements.

Commissioning for Complex Needs Team

- 3.9 The programme has been supported by
- 3 Senior Social Work Practitioners
 - 1 Specialist Complex Care Broker
- 3.10 The return on investment has demonstrated that targeted workforce capacity can generate recurring savings, in both cashable savings and cost avoidance.
- 3.11 The workstreams draw on the methodology previously implemented within the former Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board regional Commissioning for Complex Needs Programme, which delivered sustained savings while improving quality of care.
- 3.12 Through a combination of growth and reprofiling of grant funding, to embed and accelerate progress through to April 2027, additional capacity has now been secured:
- 1 new Team Manager post (to strengthen governance)
 - 1 additional CHC Senior Social Work Practitioner
 - 1 Outcome Focused Assessment practitioner
- 3.13 The specialist broker has now been funded on a permanent basis through the Welsh Governments Pathway of Care Transformation recurrent funding. This additionality, set out above, will ensure the transformation programme can further embedded practice rather than short-term intervention.

Practice and Service Improvement

3.14 It should be noted that the transformation programme has importantly also delivered measurable improved outcomes in practice and governance:

- Re-embedding of the Progression Model
- Greater consistency of assessments in line with the Adult Social Care practice model
- Increased scrutiny of high-cost packages and placements
- Reduction in overprovision of commissioned services
- Improved data monitoring and financial oversight
- Strengthened alignment between practitioners strengths-based assessment and commissioning

3.15 The programme now provides:

- Systematic social work reassessments of people receiving high levels of intensive support
- Strengthened social work practice relating to Continuing Healthcare
- Robust brokerage scrutiny
- Improved financial monitoring

Overall Assessment

3.16 The transformation programme has advanced the Learning Disability service to focus on strengths and capabilities, recognising that a level of over support had developed during the pandemic when there was limited access to the community.

3.17 The Learning Disability Transformation Programme has delivered:

- Strengthened professional practice
- Improved commissioning governance
- A sustainable financial trajectory

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

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

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

5.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - Taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming over reliant and dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy, and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – Ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council’s well-being objectives.
- **Long Term** – Learning Disability Services in Adult Social Care will enhance its practice model of strengths based and outcome-focused practice, therefore in keeping with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and more appropriate for the longer-term.
- **Collaboration** – The service model is predicated on close collaboration between the service provider, social work teams, wider stakeholders and communities, and the individuals themselves.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 There are no climate change and nature implications as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no specific safeguarding or corporate parent implications as a result of this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The table below shows the Learning Disability Budget and Spend for the last 4 financial years.

ADULT LEARNING DISABILITIES	Net Budget	Total Spend	Over Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000
2022-23	19,269	22,941	3,672
2023-24	22,227	26,623	4,396
2024-25	25,480	26,126	646
2025-26*	28,066	28,285	219

*2025-26 figures are as projected at quarter 3

8.2 The net budget has increased by £8.797 million since 2022-23. Whilst the majority of the increase will relate to implications of the Real Living Wage uplifts on commissioned services, and pay and price inflation uplifts, the table below sets out the Medium Term

Financial Strategy budget pressures approved by Council specifically for Learning Disability Services.

ADULT LEARNING DISABILITIES	£'000	Budget Pressure - Description
2023-24	758	Long term impact of Covid-19 on Learning Disabilities budgets
2024-25	1,970	Home care for adults with Learning Disabilities - increase in number of hours covered and increase in complexity of need
2025-26	325	Learning Disabilities Homecare - increase in number of hours covered and increase in complexity of need
	591	Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities - increase in placement numbers
	438	Learning Disabilities Residential and Nursing Care - changing needs
TOTAL	4,082	

8.3 Section 3 of the report sets out the following positive measurable financial impacts that the transformation programme had on the 2024-25 outturn:-

- £1,066,260 full year reduction in costs – Outcome Focussed Assessments
- £155,575 full year reduction in costs – CHC
- £124,230 cost avoidance - Brokerage

8.4 The learning disability budget for 2025-26 is £28.066 million and the projected over spend at quarter 3 is £219,000 showing a continuing year on year improvement since 2023-24 without compromising statutory responsibilities or existing service performance.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the financial and practice progress achieved to date.

Background documents:

None