

**BRIDGEND COUNTY  
BROUGH COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF  
SIROL PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR**

## **Social Services**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

2025-26



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## 1

## DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY

This is my 6th annual report as statutory director of social services in Bridgend county borough and my 11th annual report as a director of social services in a Welsh local authority. The report advises on the effectiveness of social services and wellbeing in Bridgend county borough, celebrates where we are doing well and highlights areas of improvement. Its purpose is to ensure that our strengths, of which there many are understood, and that risks and issues are clearly articulated so they can be managed and mitigated.

**The annual report is an opportunity to thank our workforce for their tireless dedication and compassion in supporting our most vulnerable residents. It is a privilege to work with people often in the most challenging times of their lives. This work is too often unseen and unheralded. Yet for those supported by the social care workforce and wellbeing workforce, there is no more important public service. I am inspired every day by the way our frontline staff go above and beyond to make life better for the people they support. This report also gives a voice to people with care and support needs – how they live well and with purpose with disabilities, mental ill health, frailty and care experience.**

Social services and wellbeing is an exemplar of good public service, embedded at the heart of local government. Our population is growing and ageing. Often words like 'crisis' are used in the public description of social care. It's important to challenge this prevailing narrative. In Bridgend, as in the rest of Wales, our registered social care services, provided by or commissioned by the Council, are publicly rated by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as overwhelmingly good and in some cases excellent. People do not wait long for assessments or to access services if needed. There is a strong preventative offer for children and families and adults and carers. We have well established models of social work practice

which are strength based and focussed on relationships. Performance is, for the most part, in the top quartile in Wales. Our workforce feels well supported by their managers and the Council and motivated and the majority would recommend working in social care in Bridgend.

There is always more to do. In the last year we have further embedded our quality assurance systems, ensuring we are focussing on qualitative as well as quantitative performance, and learning from people's experiences. Our quality assurance shows there is still some variability in how well we practice, particularly how well people's individual outcomes are recorded.

We have made good progress in reducing reliance on agency social workers and strengthening permanent staffing. In Children and Family Services, agency social worker numbers have fallen significantly since 2023, while staff retention has improved. Adult Social Care has also increased the proportion of permanent social workers. These changes have had a direct impact on the quality of what we do. Greater workforce stability improves continuity for people who use services and lowers some of the costs associated with agency staffing. Workforce wellbeing remains an important area of focus. Sickness absence remains higher than desired, with stress, anxiety and depression identified as the main reasons for absence. Recruitment, retention, wellbeing and workforce development therefore remain priorities.

Whilst the majority of our workforce feels well supported to do their jobs, there are areas where morale is lower and retention and recruitment continues to require a keen focus. We have invested significantly in 'growing our own' workforce and succession planning has been successful in recruiting into management positions. It's important that new staff and new managers feel well supported as they develop in their roles and grow in experience. It is also important that our workforce have the tools to do their jobs – a new digital case management system is being implemented. This is a high risk project given the sensitivity of the data being transferred between systems and a cause of frustration for workforce as all but the most urgent developments on the current system have been put on hold. The workforce are also anticipating the benefits of using artificial intelligence in their work with projects that will be progressed in 2026-27, to reduce bureaucracy and mean they can spend more time with the people they support.

2025-26 also saw very high levels of contacts with Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care. The investment in prevention and early intervention for children and families has meant that despite increased levels of contacts, less children have been supported in statutory care and support and in child protection and we have seen a steady but safe reduction in the number of care experienced children. This is excellent news as it means more families are being supported through early help and support services to remain together. We recognised a particular pressure with the support for teenagers and to address this have developed the Adolescent Crisis Team (ACT) to work intensively with children and families.

In Adult Social Care, the increase in contacts has translated into more adults requiring care and support plans and an increase in the number receiving care and support and care at home. The population is ageing and growing and whilst Bridgend residents' access proportionately less care home placements and hours of domiciliary care than elsewhere

in Wales, the increases in 2025-26 were higher than the demographic increase, which illustrates the pressure in the social care and health systems locally. The longstanding integrated multi-disciplinary community teams continue to represent exemplary practice, however, there is more work required to understand the need for community beds which places more pressure on community services. There is a well-developed preventative offer for adults in Bridgend through our partnerships with BAVO, Halo and Awen, assistive technology, falls prevention, community connectors and our reablement service. We recognise that preventative services could be better co-ordinated and this will be a focus for 2026-27.

Despite the decrease in the number of care experienced children, there continues to be pressure for residential care placements. This is in part due to a paucity of Bridgend foster carers and also in part due to the remodelling of the children's social care market as implementation of the milestones in the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act (2025) progress towards the removal of profit from children's social care in Wales. In response, we have taken steps to increase local capacity and reduce reliance on external providers. Two new children's homes were secured during the year, with one expected to open in summer 2026 and the other in early 2027. The Council also continued to strengthen fostering services and provide practical and therapeutic support for placements through the Placement Support Team. These actions are intended to improve stability for children, reduce disruption and keep more children supported locally. There are early signs that this approach is having an effect. There have been no circumstances where the Council has had to support a child in a placement operating without registration since November 2025 which is excellent progress. The priority for 2026–27 is to build on this progress by increasing local placement capacity, improving placement stability and strengthening support for foster carers and families.

Financial pressures remain significant. Whilst there was an underspent position at the end of 2025-26, this was largely due to short term grant funding. The number of people receiving social care and support has increased. We have responded through our 3 year plans for sustainable care and support, prevention and early intervention and wider transformation and service redesign. Our focus continues to be on workforce stability, strength based practice, prevention and early intervention, and outcome focussed services. We also emphasise the importance of strong and effective partnerships – with health, education, police, third sector, leisure and cultural partners and social care providers. We recognise the pressures that other partners face and that working together delivers better, more seamless outcomes for people, and is also more cost effective as people get the right support from the right professional more quickly. This is particularly evident in our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and integrated adult social care teams.

The Council approved additional budget pressures of £6.6 million for 2026–27. This supports continued investment in the real living wage for care workers and areas where need has been evidentially increasing for some time such as children's placements and learning disability services. The more recent increase in pressures in services for adults with long term disabilities and age related frailty requires close monitoring and oversight to understand what needs can be met more preventatively and the longer term financial implications of the growing and ageing population. We are also seeing more adults with long term health conditions stepping down from health settings, which is the right thing for them but is not accompanied by a corresponding transfer of funding. The overarching financial challenge is to achieve sustainable services without compromising timeliness, quality or outcomes. This makes prevention, early intervention, strength based practice workforce

stability, effective commissioning and service redesign increasingly important. The Council's overall digital transformation will also bring opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness which need to be harnessed.

The overall picture for 2025–26 is one of positive progress, balanced by significant levels of need which is translating into pressure in parts of our system. We have strengthened our workforce, improved practice and developed innovative services. CIW inspections and internal assurance also provide evidence of a culture of continuous improvement. Despite the challenges, this report is optimistic. We have the best workforce and strong partnerships, which we will continue to nurture and invest time in. Relationships are fundamental to the quality of our social services and wellbeing in Bridgend. They will be central to the next phase of our transformation – as we focus on achieving excellence and sustainability across all service areas.

I would like to end this introduction by again thanking our social care workforce and paying tribute to people with care and support needs. It is a privilege to be your director and to have the opportunity to elevate your experiences in this report.

Diolch o galon,

*Claire Marchant*

Corporate Director of  
Social Services and Wellbeing

JULY 2026

# 2

## CONTEXT

# What do we do?

**Social Services and Wellbeing** support children, families, adults and carers who need information, advice or assistance, care, support or safeguarding. We work in partnership with the third sector, **Halo Leisure** and the **Awen Cultural Trust** to help people stay healthy, active and connected. All services work with partners and local communities to improve wellbeing and keep people safe.

## Our services

We provide a range of services, including:

### ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Early Intervention & Prevention  
 Assessment and Care Planning  
 Safeguarding (Adult Protection)  
 Mental Health services  
 Substance Misuse  
 Residential & Nursing Care  
 Extra Care  
 Supported Living  
 Domiciliary Care (Home care)  
 Reablement & Residential  
 Reablement  
 Shared Lives  
 Equipment, Adaptations  
 & Telecare  
 Respite Care  
 Direct Payments  
 Day Care  
 Advocacy  
 Service Provision in  
 Secure Estates

- Caswell Clinic
- HMP Parc

### PREVENTION AND WELLBEING

Early Intervention  
 & Prevention  
 Active 4 Life  
 Discovery Days  
 BAVO Partnership

- Building Community Resilience

Community Engagement  
 Aging Well  
 Carer / Young Carer Support  
 Community Hubs  
 Awen Partnership

- Libraries
- Theatres / Cultural Hubs
- Work Based Initiatives

Halo Healthy Living  
 Partnership

- Life Centres
- GP Referral Scheme
- Falls Prevention
- Health and Wellbeing Membership
- Free Swim Initiative
- Feel Good 4 Life
- Carers Respite

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Early Intervention  
 & Prevention  
 Assessment and  
 Care Planning  
 Safeguarding  
 (Child Protection)  
 Foster Care  
 Residential Care  
 Care Leavers  
 Direct Payments  
 Respite Care  
 Advocacy

# Who do we support?

We work with children and adults, along with their families and carers, to support them to live safely and live well. We often work in challenging situations, supporting people whose needs arise from age related frailty, disability, mental ill health, poverty, or the risk of neglect or abuse.

As of 31st March 2026, we were supporting **911 children and young people** in statutory children's services, a 10% decrease compared with 31st March 2025. We were supporting **2,126 adults** during the same period, representing a 8% increase from the previous year.

The tables below show how many people are currently receiving ongoing, managed care and support. This does **not** include people who are still being assessed and do not yet have a care plan.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Number of Children & Young People Supported as at 31st March 2026 \*      Change from 31st March 2025

|                           |            |             |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Care and Support          | <b>507</b> | <b>-102</b> |
| Child Protection          | <b>91</b>  | <b>+17</b>  |
| Care Experienced Children | <b>316</b> | <b>-17</b>  |

\* These figures include 236 children with a disability and 99 care leavers. A child or young person can be in more than one category.

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Number of People Supported as at 31st March 2026 \*\*      Change from 31st March 2025

|                                     |             |                  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Early Intervention & Prevention Hub | <b>50</b>   | <b>-22</b>       |
| Network Adult Social Work Teams     | <b>1462</b> | <b>+152</b>      |
| Older People Mental Health Team     | <b>70</b>   | <b>+8</b>        |
| Hospital Team                       | <b>33</b>   | <b>NO CHANGE</b> |
| Learning Disability                 | <b>353</b>  | <b>+6</b>        |
| Mental Health                       | <b>146</b>  | <b>-13</b>       |
| Secure Estates                      | <b>12</b>   | <b>+1</b>        |

\*\* All teams support adults aged 18+ including older adults, those with cognitive impairment, a physical disability and / or sensory loss or impairment.

We also work with significant numbers of children and families, adults and carers preventatively which means that despite our growing and ageing population we are able to effectively meet needs.



## Planning for Future Need

Planning sustainable social care and wellbeing services requires a clear understanding of both current and future population needs. Population projections for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region as set out in the Population Needs Assessment 2022-2027 indicated that whilst the total population is expected to increase by 3% over the next ten years and 5% over the next twenty years, the most significant growth will be amongst older people, particularly those aged 85 years and over.

At the same time, the working-age population is expected to decrease. These demographic changes will increase demand for community support, accommodation-based services, dementia services, integrated care and support for unpaid carers if we continue to operate as we currently do. We also know that with the development of the new special school to replace Heronsbridge that more families with children with significant disabilities may move to Bridgend so they can benefit from the excellent provision. This will impact on the need for Children and Family Services, and over time Adult Social Care services.

Bridgend's population is already becoming older. Between 2011 and 2021, the population increased by 5%, the proportion of residents aged 65-74 increased from 10% to 11%, and those aged 75-84 increased from 6% to 7%. The number of residents aged 50-64 increased by 13%, whilst the proportion of people aged 35-49 decreased. These trends are significant because as we age we are more likely to require wellbeing and social care support.

## Increasing Demand and Complexity

Demand for social care services increased during 2025-26. Adult Social Care received 6,610 contacts, a 6% increase compared with the previous year. The number of adults with a care support plan as at 31st March 2026 increased by 8% to 2,126 people, whilst the number of adults supported by Adult Social Work Teams increased by 13%, rising from 1,388 to 1,565 people.

There is also increasing complexity of need. The proportion of adult assessments leading to a care and support plan increased from 16% to 22%, suggesting that the people contacting us require more support. In Children and Family Services, contacts increased by 15%, rising from 14,828 to 16,994 during the year. Whilst child protection activity increased, with the number of children subject to child protection plans increasing by 21%, from 75 to 91 children as at 31 March 2026, this still represents a significant decrease from previous years. The number of children supported through care and support plans and care experienced children fell.

## The Importance of Prevention

To respond to increasing need we prioritise prevention and early intervention. Evidence suggests that this approach is helping people receive support earlier and reducing unnecessary escalation into statutory services.

Whilst adult contacts increased by 6%, completed adult assessments increased by only 2% during the same period, indicating that more people are being supported through information, advice, assistance and community-based services. Within Children and Family Services, although overall contacts increased by 15%, the proportion progressing to statutory assessment reduced from 8% to 7%, reflecting improved screening arrangements and stronger preventative services.

Local Community Coordinators supported 797 adults during the year, a 32% increase from 606 people the previous year. Preventative support for children and young people also increased substantially, from 140 to 310 children / young people representing an increase of over 120%. These services play a vital role in helping people remain independent and connected within their communities.

## Sustainable Social Services

Our commissioning strategies inform future service development. During the year, housing and accommodation reviews identified the need for a fourth Extra Care housing scheme within the county borough. Children and Family Services also progressed plans to expand local residential provision, with two additional children's homes progressed and further developments being considered.

Progress has also been made in strengthening local fostering capacity and developing supported living opportunities. These developments aim to reduce reliance on external placements and ensure that more children can remain close to their families, communities and support networks.

## Supporting Our Carers

We know that unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting health and social care systems. Bridgend currently has an estimated 17,000 unpaid carers, although only around 2,100 are known to services.

The Population Needs Assessment projects that the number of carers aged 65 and over could increase by almost 50% by 2035. This highlights the importance of identifying carers earlier, increasing access to support and strengthening services to help carers maintain their own health and wellbeing. We have improved the way we listen to, and act on what carers are telling us in the last year and have seen an increase in the number of carers taking up the offer of a carers assessment.

## Looking Ahead

Sustainability will depend on continuing to balance growing need with available resources by being focussed on our prevention and early intervention offer. We will strengthen our front door arrangements so it is easier to access advice and information.

Our practice will continue to be strength based and outcome focussed. Our commissioning and service planning activity will focus on prevention, community resilience, workforce support, accommodation development, digital transformation and integrated working with health and other regional partners. By using population intelligence and evidence-based commissioning, we aim to ensure that social care and wellbeing services remain sustainable, affordable and able to meet the changing needs of Bridgend residents in the years ahead.

# 2025-26: The year in summary

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

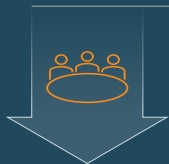


### 15% INCREASE

16994 contacts received in the year



1172 contacts provided with advice or assistance



### 9% DECREASE

632 section child protection enquiries held



### 23% DECREASE

1207 new care and support assessments completed in the year



35

### 64% DECREASE

in the number of young carers needs assessments completed in the year



### 1% INCREASE

275 new care and support assessments that progressed to a care and support plan



911

### 10% DECREASE

in the number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March



316

### 5% DECREASE

in the number of care experienced children at 31st March



91

### 21% INCREASE

in the number of children on the child protection register at 31st March

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE



### 6% INCREASE

6610 contacts received in the year



### 3% INCREASE

2624 contacts provided with advice and assistance



### 2% INCREASE

2546 new care and support assessments completed in the year



215

### 41% INCREASE

in the number of carers needs assessments for adults completed in the year



### 7% INCREASE

566 new care and support assessments progressed to a care and support plan



2126

### 8% INCREASE

in the number of adults in receipt of homecare as at 31st March



869

### 15% INCREASE

in the number of adults in receipt of homecare as at 31st March



519

### 5% INCREASE

in the number of adults supported in residential or nursing care at 31st March

# Corporate Management Team

In 2025-26, the Council entered its third year of ‘**Delivering Together Our Corporate Plan 2023-28**’ which explains the priorities and how we will work with partners and local people to deliver services.

The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) is led by the Chief Executive and includes the Corporate Directors and Chief Officers. The Corporate Director, Social Services & Wellbeing fulfils their responsibilities under **part 8 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014** by acting as the CMT lead responsible for ensuring the local authority effectively discharges its statutory care and safeguarding functions.

Bridgend County Borough Council

**Delivering Together**

Our Corporate Plan 2023-28



## Political Leadership

The Council has 51 Councillors who are elected every five years by the community. They represent the people of Bridgend County Borough (BCBC) and set the overall Council strategy and budget.

The Council's Cabinet has 8 members: the Council Leader and 7 portfolio holders. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing is responsible for adult and children's social services, and health and wellbeing services across the borough.

## Governance & Accountability

The Council's Scrutiny Committees meet at least four times a year to review performance, budgets and changes to services, and make recommendations on future policy and service improvements.

The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting Committee, chaired by the Deputy Leader, meets quarterly to make decisions about services for care experienced children and care leavers.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing is part of the Council's senior management team and regularly meets with Cabinet and other senior managers to review progress against the Council's priorities. This helps make sure the directorate's work supports the Council's overall aims.

The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate reviews performance, quality and management information every month across teams and services. More detailed reviews at a group manager level take place every quarter to make sure services are performing well, meeting targets and delivering the priorities in the Council's plans.

# Workforce

## Recruitment & Retention

A values-driven, well-motivated, highly supported, and well trained workforce is essential for delivering quality services and achieving positive outcomes for the people we support. Therefore, improving workforce wellbeing, retention and recruitment is a key priority.

| SERVICE AREA                                                  | 31st March 2025 |             | 31st March 2026 |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                                               | FTE             | Headcount   | FTE             | Headcount   |
| Adult Social Care                                             | 571.39          | 734         | 583.76          | 743         |
| Children and Family Services                                  | 352.43          | 405         | 369.02          | 416         |
| Prevention and Wellbeing                                      | 25.73           | 30          | 26.11           | 62          |
| Business Strategy, Commissioning, Performance and Improvement | 72.74           | 77          | 77.66           | 84          |
| Commissioning                                                 | 9.62            | 10          | 9.81            | 10          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                  | <b>1031.91</b>  | <b>1256</b> | <b>1066.36</b>  | <b>1326</b> |

We have continued to improve our workforce position, some key achievements were highlighted in the CIW improvement check of Children and Family Services in June 2025.

The number of agency social workers has reduced significantly across the directorate. In Children and Family Services agency social worker numbers have fallen by 86% since May 2023, from 77 to 11, while agency use in residential services has reduced by 40% over the past year. Staff retention has also improved from 81% to 86% and has remained strong. In Adult Social Care, between July 2024 and March 2026, the proportion of agency social workers reduced from 13% to 10% of the workforce, while permanent staffing levels increased from 77% to 89%, demonstrating a stronger and more stable workforce across both services.

Overall, there have been fewer incidences of absence due to sickness compared to last year, and most teams have seen improvements. However, sickness absence is still too high. Workforce wellbeing and staff support is a major focus. The highest reason people are off work is stress, anxiety, or depression that is not caused by work. To improve staff wellbeing, we've promoted flexible working and targeted health and wellbeing initiatives and encouraged both individual and team wellbeing activities. We also work closely with Human Resources to manage sickness absence effectively and make sure staff are well supported.



# Learning and Development

Bridgend Social Care Academi provides learning and development opportunities for local authority and Bridgend care provider staff, foster carers, carers and volunteers. Training is delivered through a mix of e-learning and face-to-face sessions, helping people complete the required training while accessing practical support.

We have expanded the use of Padlet, a digital platform where staff can access and revisit training resources. Dedicated Padlet pages are available for key topics including practice models, safeguarding, supervision skills, children's residential care and social work.

In 2025-26, the Social Care Workforce Development Team delivered training to 2,336 staff from statutory agencies and 930 staff from independent and third sector providers.

## Growing Our Own

### EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS

We worked with Employability Bridgend to deliver a two week "Pathways to Care" programme, providing accredited training in medication administration, safeguarding and first aid. Participants also heard from people who receive care and from social care staff working in Bridgend.

We work closely with local secondary schools and Bridgend College to promote careers in social care. This has generated interest in the Council's apprenticeship programme. There are now three social care apprentices who have started with the Council this year.

This year, we also partnered with ELITE, a supported employment project involving the Princess of Wales Hospital and Bridgend College. Two students completed work placements and subsequently secured jobs in BCBC.

Supported internships provide people with learning disabilities with valuable work experience, helping improve employment opportunities and support workforce inclusion. Two interns who completed placements in a Council residential care home through a previous programme have since secured permanent employment with the Council. The first BCBC employed supported interns will be commencing in Autumn 2026.

### DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS

Our Social Services Practitioner programme supports existing social care staff to gain qualifications and progress their careers, including progressing to a social work degree. The programme is a route into the Open University (Wales) Social Work degree, and four students completing the programme in summer 2026 will begin the degree in September 2026.

We have also seconded staff and hosted social work students from Bridgend College, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff University and the Open University. These staff and students act as ambassadors for the Council, with many new recruits citing their positive experiences as a factor in applying for roles in Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services.

Plans are in place to celebrate eight social work students graduating in 2026. All have secured jobs with BCBC.



# Staff Feedback

We asked our staff to complete a survey so we could understand their views and experiences over the past year. This is what they told us:

## KEY STRENGTHS

- 94%** know how to access support if needed
- 92%** understand what is expected in their role
- 91%** can access relevant training
- 90%** Agree or agreed to a certain extent that they can easily access training relevant to their post
- 87%** would recommend Social Care in Bridgend as a place to work

## AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 78%** have opportunities to contribute to decisions within their teams
- 72%** feel valued at work
- 69%** have the right tools and support to undertake role
- 56%** have the right opportunities available to progress their career

Survey results are similar to last year, with improvements in the numbers of staff feeling supported, valued, and positive about working for the Council. Staff continue to report strong management and colleague support, while career progression, access to tools and resources and, in some teams, morale are areas for improvement.



# What Next?

To support more people to enter, develop and progress in social care careers, we continue to develop career pathways training, learning and development opportunities.

## CREATING MORE ROUTES INTO CARE CAREERS

We will continue to support people to begin careers in social care through apprenticeships, work experience and partnerships with schools, colleges, universities and supported employment agencies. In 2026, apprenticeship opportunities will expand into Children's Residential Care.

## SUPPORTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

We will introduce a new pathway for care and support staff who are interested in becoming social workers. Staff will be supported to complete the first stage of the Open University (Wales) Social Work degree, helping them gain the academic knowledge, skills and experience needed to explore a future career in social work.

## STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CARE

As children's residential services grow, we will invest in our workforce through tailored induction programmes, a clear training plan, qualifications and ongoing professional development opportunities.

## IMPROVING CARE AND SUPPORT

Following a successful pilot, a new strengths-based approach to risk assessment will be introduced across services during 2026–27. This will support staff to focus on people's strengths and promote positive outcomes while managing risks safely.

## SUPPORTING STAFF WELLBEING

We will prioritise wellbeing, providing more resources and opportunities for team development, wellbeing activities to support a healthy and resilient workforce.

## SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS

From September 2026, the Council will employ our first supported interns through a programme for up to 12 young people with learning disabilities. The programme will provide work placements and help participants develop the skills, experience and confidence needed to move into employment.



# Celebrating Our Workforce

## EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

**Outstanding academic achievement:** One MSc in Social Work trainee at Cardiff University achieved the **highest dissertation mark in their cohort**.

**Peer recognition:** Another MSc trainee was voted by fellow students as the person they would most like to have as their own social worker.

**Excellent degree outcomes:** Four seconded staff members achieved First Class Honours in the BSc (Hons) in Social Work at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

**Student success:** A hosted student successfully completed the BSc (Hons) in Social Work programme.



**SOCIAL CARE WALES ACCOLADES 2026**

**LEARNER OF THE YEAR**

To find out why Catherine won the award click [here](#)

**SUMMER 2025 GRADUATES WITH STAFF FROM BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AND BRIDGEND COLLEGE**



**ADULT SOCIAL CARE CELEBRATION EVENT**

**17<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026: CELEBRATING WORD SOCIAL WORK DAY**





# Financial Resources

The net budget for Adult and Children's Social Care for 2025-26 was £113.134 million and the actual outturn was £111.398 million resulting in an underspend of £1.736 million

| SSWB                            | 2025-26<br>Expenditure<br>Budget<br>£'000 | 2025-26<br>Income<br>Budget<br>£'000 | 2025-26<br>Net Spend<br>Budget<br>£'000 | 2025-26<br>Actual<br>Outturn<br>£'000 | 2025-26<br>Variance<br>£'000 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Older People (aged 65 and over) | 48,221                                    | (13,641)                             | 34,580                                  | 34,266                                | (314)                        |
| Adults (aged under 65)          | 57,464                                    | (12,970)                             | 44,494                                  | 43,563                                | (931)                        |
| Childrens and Families Services | 35,307                                    | (1,247)                              | 34,060                                  | 33,569                                | (491)                        |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>140,992</b>                            | <b>(27,858)</b>                      | <b>113,134</b>                          | <b>111,398</b>                        | <b>(1,736)</b>               |

While the Directorate reported an underspend of £1.736 million the main reason for the under spend was maximisation of grants across the service including Children and Communities Grant (CCG) (£608,000), Housing Support Grant (HSG) (£539,000) and Pathways of Care Grant (£726,000). Without this additional funding, the directorate would have overspent by £137,000.

There continues to be pressures in budgets for children's residential placements and physical disability/sensory impairment and older person's services driven by the complexity of need and levels of demand across these services.

The Social Services Improvement Board is overseeing a number of actions to address the pressure in the Adult Social Care budget, including accelerating the work to transform learning disabilities. It is clear that pressures are becoming

more acute in Adult Social Care with an increase in the numbers of people receiving social care services – care and support and residential – has increased.

To support the Directorate in addressing these ongoing pressures, on 25th February 2026, Council approved £6.6 million in budget pressures for 2026-27 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2029-30. These included £3.000 million towards the implications of Real Living Wage uplifts on commissioned contracts, £1.498 million Childrens Services Residential Homes, £800,000 Transition Learning Disabilities Residential, £250,000 Adult Social Care residential pressures, £250,000 for Children's Supported Accommodation, £200,000 Accommodation Unit, £183,000 Community Sports Development and £151,000 Transition Independent Domiciliary Care.

# 3

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

This assessment covers both children and family services and adult services. It explains what the local authority has done during the year to meet the quality standards in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

Each section is divided into three parts: Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care, and, where work has been done across the whole Social Services and Wellbeing directorate, a section called “Across Social Services and Wellbeing”.

At the end of each of the four sections, you will also find our priorities for 2026–27.





# People

## Quality Standards

“All people are equal partners who have **choice, voice and control** over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them”

“Effective **leadership** is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported **workforce** working towards a shared vision”



# Across Social Services

## Voice, Choice and Control

Listening to and involving people is central to everything we do. People's experiences help us understand what we're doing well and where we can improve.

### Strengthening Voice Through Advocacy

Advocacy helps people have their voice heard about the care and support they receive, ensuring their views and wishes are listened to and acted on. It is important that everyone who uses our services knows that this support is available. Making people aware of advocacy is known as the "active offer".

|                                                                                                | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Number of 'Active Offers' of advocacy for <b>children</b> during the year                      | 54      | 31      |
| Of which, number of <b>children</b> where an Independent Professional Advocate was provided    | 39      | 24      |
| Number of <b>adults</b> where the need for an Independent Professional Advocate was identified | 102     | 101     |
| Of which, number of <b>adults</b> where an Independent Advocate was provided                   | 67      | 43      |

In 2025–26, 101 adults were identified as needing an Independent Professional Advocate (IPA), with 43 receiving support (42%). Bridgend has a Hub and Spoke model to ensure people are directed to the right advocacy service. A review was undertaken and identified improvements which freed up capacity. This is helping to reduce waiting lists.

In Children and Family Services, advocacy uptake has decreased. The Corporate Parenting Board has acted on feedback from care experienced young people and continues to work with Tros Gynnal Plant to promote access to advocacy. Youth forum membership has increased, strengthening young people's voice in shaping services. The Board is taking forward work on what it means for care experience to be recognised by the Council as a protected characteristic.



## Direct Payments: Choice & Control

Direct Payments enable people to manage a personal budget to arrange their own care and support, giving them more choice, control and independence. They decide who supports them, when, and how their needs are met.



As of 31st March 2026, 403 people were receiving a direct payment, the same number as the previous year. The number of adults receiving a direct payment increased from 244 to 253, while the number of children and young people receiving a direct payment decreased from 159 to 150.

## Learning from Experience

We use the “Most Significant Change” (MSC) approach and “Magic Moments, Tragic Moments” (MMTM) to hear people’s stories and improve practice.

### MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

**What life was like before:** Parent A approached the Local Authority for support during the diagnosis journey for their son of a Pathological Avoidance Disorder. They approached Early Help and the Children’s Disability Team for support but were unsatisfied with the advice and guidance received.

**What it is like following the change or experience?:** Parent A was initially frustrated with the service responses which led to an informal complaint. Through improved communication they feel more confident advocating for themselves and their son.

**Of all the experiences, what was the most significant?:** Parent A now supports other parents in parent/carer groups and is actively involved in participation groups with other parents for Early Help service development.

#### Indicators of change:

- Enhanced parental confidence
- Improved advocacy skills for the self and others
- Participation evidence of service improvement and learning from real stories
- Improved practitioner connection building strategies for child engagement

## MAGIC MOMENT, TRAGIC MOMENTS IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE

**Magic Moment:** Adult A was supported to improve their mobility and confidence through effective care and support planning and later returned to volunteer work at a local Men's Shed group.

**Tragic Moment:** Inconsistencies in Support at Home care scheduling caused initial frustration leading to an informal complaint, however it later prompted improvements in communication and care co-ordination.

**Outcome:** Adult A now lives independently and contributes to reflective learning and service improvement within Adult Social Care Integrated Network teams.

### Indicators of change:

- Increased independence and community participation
- Improved consistency and communication in care delivery
- Reflective learning from positive and challenging experiences
- Stronger person-centred practice and accountability

Over the next year, we will continue to embed these frameworks. This will ensure people with lived experience have the time and space to share their experiences. Learning is used alongside workforce training, compliments and complaints, and through our Continuous Improvement Groups to support practice.

# Working with Carers to Develop Support Networks

We have worked with Bridgend Carers Centre and other partners to improve support for people caring for loved ones with dementia. By listening to carers and understanding their needs, we have developed stronger local support networks, activities and opportunities that are welcoming and accessible for both carers and people living with dementia.

We know this work is making a difference from talking to carers, feedback from community sessions, and more people taking part in activities and wellbeing support. Carers have said they really value the chance to meet others, get advice and feel less alone.

During the year, partners ran Dementia Action Week events, family support sessions, community walks, and awareness activities across the area. There has also been good progress in improving how organisations work together in promoting

local dementia support services.

Next year, the focus will be on strengthening carer networks, making sure people know what support is available, reaching carers earlier, and offering more community based wellbeing activities.

Overall, this work has helped carers feel more connected, supported and informed, while also building stronger partnerships and more dementia friendly communities.

# WHAT IS CARERS RESPITE?

Halo's Carers Respite Programme, in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council, provides unpaid carers the opportunity to improve their physical and mental wellbeing in a relaxed setting. Each programme is six-weeks long and takes place in-person. During the weekly two-hour sessions participants have the opportunity to connect with one another, share stories, learn to manage stress, receive professional nutrition information, learn about carers rights and supports, and engage in tailored physical activity.

This Programme gave me time to switch off mentally, which I haven't done for years. I felt less anxious and more emotionally balanced after attending the programme. It helped me reduce the constant feeling of overwhelm that comes with caring for my loved one.

I was able to rest properly and felt physically charged.

## REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS



Sessions are provided free of charge.

145 hours of free replacement care provided last year.

**FREE**



**MEMBER**

Over 22 two-month Halo memberships have been given to encourage carers to use Halo facilities after the sessions have ended.

## INCREASED ACTIVITY LEVELS, CONNECTIONS, AND QUALITY OF LIFE



By the end of six weeks, 95% of participants said they felt more connected to other carers.



99% of participants said they felt able to implement what they learned in the nutrition and relaxation sessions in their everyday lives.

100% of participants reported an improvement in their ability to manage their mental health and wellbeing (increase of 2.3 to 4.5 on a scale of 1-5), and knowledge of community supports (increase of 2.1 to 4.6 on a scale of 1-5).



By the end of the programme, 89% of participants said they were exercising four times a week or more.



## LEARN MORE

Watch a video  
about  
programme.

Visit our  
website.

Here is the link to Halo's Carer's respite programme [website](#).



# Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

Providing staff with training on people's language, culture, and background helps them communicate more clearly, show respect, and tailor care to each individual. This makes people feel valued, understood, and safe, which in turn improves their overall experience and outcomes.

In Wales, this approach is supported by key government strategies and frameworks that guide organisations to deliver fair, person-centred care.

## Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan is a national framework set by the Welsh Government that Social Services and Wellbeing has committed to. It makes anti-racism a core value and aims to improve fairness and outcomes for communities. The Bridgend social care workforce is becoming increasingly diverse. We have reviewed where we are against the standard in the plan. The plan sets out actions to build anti-racism into everyday work, policies and services to help eliminate racism.

Our self-assessment will inform a detailed action plan with clear, measurable steps to track progress and focus on proven improvements. This will support national reporting through the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and ensure we meet the plan's goals by 2030.

## Mwy Na Geiriau / More than Words

Mwy na Geiriau is Welsh Government's plan to make sure the Welsh language is an integral part of health and social care. We have updated our action plan to help staff develop their Welsh language skills and are focussing on ensuring managers and leaders take responsibility for supporting and promoting the use of Welsh.

The plan is closely linked with the Council's Equalities Team, Social Care Workforce Development Programme and Human Resources team. By working together, we have strengthened our partnerships, created a central list of staff who can speak Welsh, and reviewed the level of Welsh language skills needed for frontline roles.

Within Social Services and Wellbeing, 3 staff were enrolled on in-house Welsh language courses, and 34% of staff have declared some level of Welsh language skill.

## Key Developments

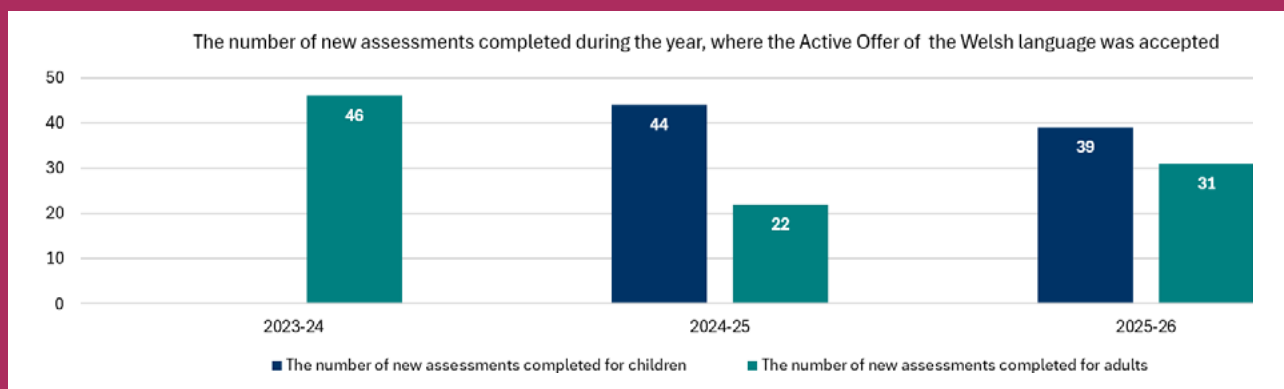
- The creation of an Active Offer factsheet to support delivery of Welsh language services.
- Ensuring the new case management information system can record individuals' language preferences.
- Identifying frontline social services staff who would benefit from Welsh language training.
- The promotion of Welsh language learning opportunities through staff coffee mornings.
- Raising awareness of "Welsh in the Workplace" through staff communications.
- Development of online resources to support understanding of the Welsh language and in social work.



In addition, we encourage Welsh speaking social work students to receive practice learning support in Welsh. Welsh Language Awareness training is mandatory for all staff, and we actively promote Welsh language training opportunities available through Social Care Wales.

## The Active Offer

Mwy na Geiriau supports the Active Offer by making Welsh language services available as part of everyday care, without people having to ask.



In 2025–26, 39 children and 31 adults chose to receive services in Welsh. Adult uptake has increased since last year, showing growing demand for Welsh language services.

## What Next?

- We will improve access to our register of Welsh speaking staff.
- Reissue our Active Offer guidance to help staff understand their responsibilities.
- Work in partnership with Human Resources, to further develop our workforce strategy, including exploring a minimum level of Welsh language skills for all social services staff.



# Children and Family Services

## Voice and Control

Voice, choice and control are central to Children and Family Services. We support this through a range of engagement activities that ensure children, families, and carers are listened to and actively involved in decisions about their care.

Below are key examples of engagement activity undertaken across Children and Family Services, including work with care experienced young people, supported by the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer.

### Children & Family Services: Engagement Overview

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

We held three community events this year, with around 90 families taking part. These events gave children, young people and their families a chance to share their experiences, express their views, and help shape how our services develop in the future.

#### WILD ROOTS

Our Wild Roots programme uses outdoor activities to connect with young people, especially those who find it harder to engage in formal settings. It has helped us hear directly from them about their experiences and what support works best for them.

#### VOICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Across our service, we make sure to listen to and record the views of children, young people and families in our everyday work. This is a key part of how we operate and is reflected in our records, reviews and how we measure outcomes. We also use real life case studies and family stories to show the impact of our work, including in our recent Social Care Wales Accolades submission in which we were shortlisted for the finals.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE 11+ OFFER

In developing our 11+ Early Help service, we spoke with secondary school learners and heard from over 180 young people. Their feedback has given us valuable insight into the support they want and has helped shape how the service is being designed.

#### FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

We collect feedback from children, young people and families after they've received support. This is helping us get a clearer and more consistent understanding of what families think about the service and where we can improve.

#### PARENTING CAFÉS

The Early Help service will lead on setting up Parenting Cafés, giving parents and carers a chance to share their views and help shape the support available in their local area.

## Care Experienced Children & Young People: Engagement Overview

### STATUTORY VISITS, REVIEWS & ADVOCACY

Children and young people in care are regularly given opportunities to share what they think, want, and feel during statutory visits and review meetings about their care. They can also get help from independent advocates, who support them in speaking up about specific concerns and making sure their views are listened to when decisions are made about their lives.

### BRIDGEND YOUTH FORUM (BYF) PARTICIPATION

The Bridgend Youth Forum, run by TGP Cymru, gives young people in care and care leavers a clear way to share their ideas and help improve the services they use. By taking part, they help shape service and practice, get involved in recruitment and selection, attend national events, and support projects like creating online resources for young people. This helps make sure they have a real say in shaping services.

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMIT (AUTUMN 2025)

The Young People's Summit was the first event of its kind in Bridgend where care experienced young people met professionals in one place. It created a safe and positive space to talk and build relationships. The event focused on four key themes: Your Voice, Your Future, Your Education, and Your Health, with dedicated workshops for young people to share their views, wishes, and feelings.

### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

Young people want to be listened to and understand why they are in care. They have hopes for the future but also worries. They value support in school but can feel pressured and unheard, especially when adults speak to carers instead of them.

### IMPACT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Feedback gathered from these events is used to improve services and practice so they better meet young people's needs and are more inclusive and responsive. It will also help shape the priorities of Children and Family Services and the Corporate Parenting Board, supporting better planning and stronger partnerships with young people who have experience of care.

## Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

### Embedding the Signs of Safety Practice Model

Signs of safety focuses on building a detailed, balanced picture of family strengths and worries so that children's safety is assured through collaborative practical plans created with the family and their network.

Our Signs of Safety training programme provides comprehensive multi-agency training and development for staff and partners to ensure effective and consistent implementation of the practice model.

Signs of Stability and Signs of Wellbeing practice have been introduced across several teams, including the Care Experienced Children Team, Just Ask 15+, the Independent Reviewing Officer Service, and the Early Help and Children and

Family Support Service (CFSS). Core Signs of Safety training has continued, supporting new staff to learn the approach whilst giving existing staff the opportunity to refresh their knowledge. 80% of staff have now been trained in this practice model.

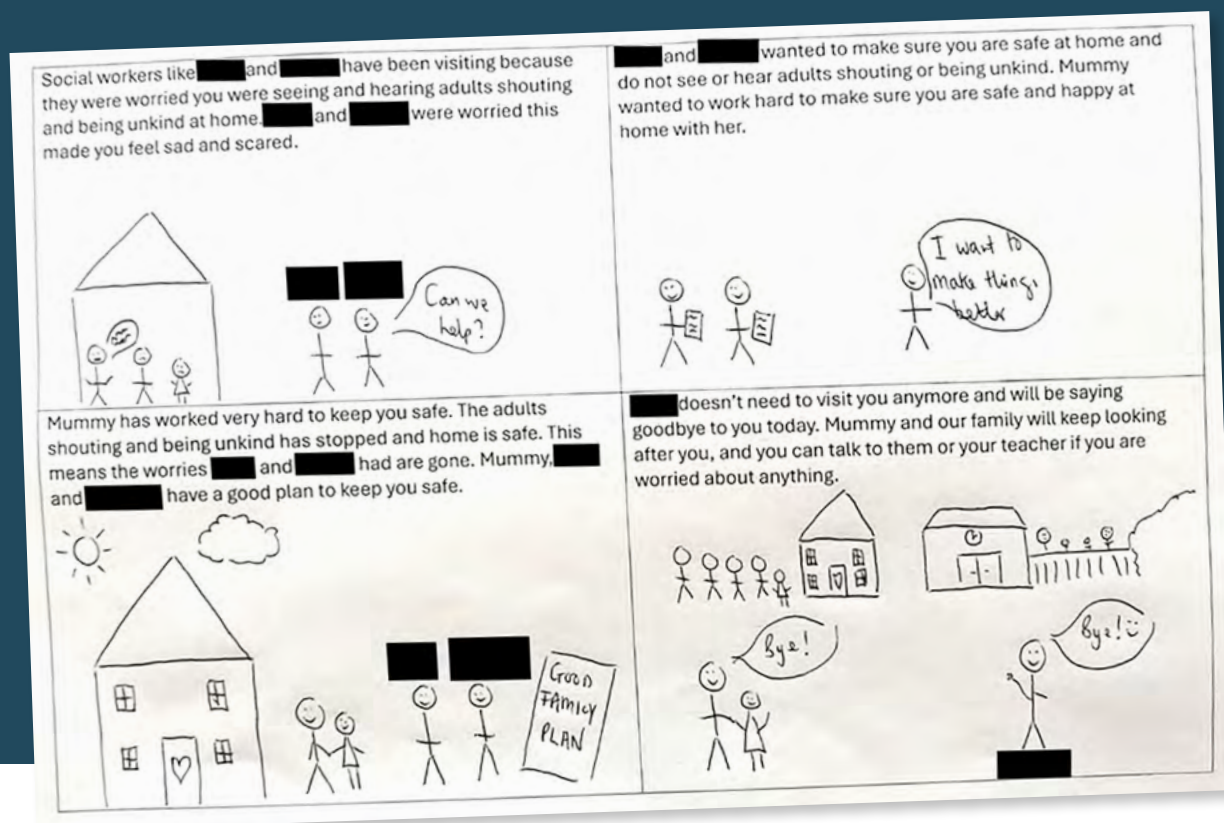
Quality assurance audits are used to help understand how effective the new model is and what results it is achieving.

## CASE STUDY:

# A SIGNS OF SAFETY APPROACH

This information here shows how words and pictures were used to help a child understand why social services became involved and what their role was in supporting the family.

The case had a positive outcome, with the mother working well with professionals and her support network. The social worker used the Signs of Safety approach, focusing on the family's strengths and practical solutions to help achieve positive changes.



# Adult Social Care

## Voice and Control

Voice, choice and control are also central to our Adult Social Care Services. We talk to people, actively listen and include them in decisions, so services fit what people need and care about most.

Here is a brief summary of established groups that work together to improve services across the borough:

### Better Together Bridgend

Better Together Bridgend is a partnership that works to improve services and support for adults with learning disabilities in Bridgend county borough.

It brings together people with learning disabilities, families and carers, Bridgend County Borough Council, health services, support providers, housing organisations, voluntary sector groups, and regional partners to help shape services and drive positive change.

The partnership focuses on four key areas:

- Parent and Carer Forum
- Communication and Relationships
- NHS Health Profile
- Strategic Development



Supported by People First Bridgend, with a member of People First as chair, the partnership meets regularly to discuss what matters most to people with learning disabilities, including where they live, how they spend their time, and the support they receive.

Together, partners oversee a shared plan to improve services and outcomes for people with learning disabilities across Bridgend.

### Having a Say Group

The Having a Say Group is now in its fourth year of meeting and continues to go from strength to strength.

It brings together people with learning disabilities who live in their own homes and are supported by Bridgend staff.

The meetings are always lively, creative and supportive. They are a safe space for sharing, learning, informing and supporting each other and the services that operate in the area.

It has grown into a group that not only helps people make friends and connect with others but also gives them a chance to share their views and influence the council's work.

Recently, members of the group went to a scrutiny meeting to talk about what matters most to them.

## Plan-it Wel

During the year, a new group called Plan-it Wel (Work, Education and Leisure) was set up. It is an advisory and co-production group that works with council staff to explore and plan meaningful day opportunities for now and in the future.

The name of the group was decided by people with learning disabilities and reflects what is important to them. They have recently been involved in developing a questionnaire for people with a learning disability to ensure they have a voice, choice and control in how they spend their time now, and what they would like for the future. The group explores peoples hopes, dreams and aspirations and how, with support from the Council and partners, they can work towards fulfilling these.

The group has recently been involved in the development of the roles of Day Opportunity Mentors, a new role supporting individuals to move into meaningful occupation such as education, volunteering, supported employment and paid employment.



## Evidence Based Review of Bridgend Resource Centre

A review of Bridgend Resource Centre and other day opportunities was carried out with people who use the services, staff and partners. A new approach has been developed with a focus on expanding opportunities, including paid employment, volunteering, work experience, education and training, community groups, and greater access to mainstream community opportunities. This gives people more choice, increase independence and help them achieve their personal goals.

Bridgend Resource Centre is now an assessment and transition service. 10 people are currently being supported to move into community based services that better meet their needs.

Work is also taking place with partners to make better use of local buildings and community spaces, creating a wider range of inclusive specialist and mainstream activities across daytime, evening and weekend services. People, families, carers and staff are helping shape these developments.



# Developing a Skilled and Supported Workforce

## Embedding the Strength-Based Outcome-Focussed Practice Model

Our practice model puts people's goals, capabilities and networks at the centre of assessment and support.

We ran strength-based practice training for the fourth year in a row. The two day course was aimed at new and newly qualified staff focussing on people's strengths, independence, choices and wellbeing, rather than just their needs or problems. Staff also learned how to have better conversations with people and families to support positive change.

While the approach is now well embedded in assessment and care management, it needs to be used more consistently in direct care services which will be a focus in 2026-27.

### CASE STUDY:

## STRENGTHS-BASED, OUTCOMES-FOCUSED PRACTICE

Adult B, aged 38, described how experiencing domestic abuse, trauma and substance misuse from an early age had a significant impact on their life.

*"I was scared all the time. I'd snap instantly because that's all I knew."*

As an adult, B experienced addiction, repeated periods in prison and fractured family relationships. Prior to receiving support, they described becoming increasingly isolated and withdrawn.

*"I wouldn't leave my house except to walk my dog. I stayed in my bedroom for 15 years. I didn't care about myself before. I just let myself go."*

Following a series of seizures, Adult B recognised they could no longer cope alone and sought support.

*"I felt my body shutting down and I was like, 'Right, now is the point. I can't ignore this anymore'."*

Practitioners took time to understand Adult B's experiences, strengths and what mattered most to them. Through strengths-based conversations,

they helped Adult B understand the impact of trauma, build on their own motivation to change and draw on support from family and wider networks. Support included detox, rehabilitation and ongoing therapeutic support.

Reflecting on this experience, Adult B said:

*"The team built me up. It's mad that someone cares so much about someone they didn't know."*

The outcomes that mattered most were improving wellbeing, rebuilding family relationships and living independently.

*"My eyes are open. I'm just living my life now. It's an amazing feeling being off the drugs and reuniting with your family."*

**Outcome:** By focusing on Adult B's strengths, resilience and aspirations, practitioners supported sustained recovery, improved wellbeing, stronger family relationships, increased independence and greater voice, choice and control over their future.

# People: 2026-27 Key Priorities

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## ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

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Ensure that access to prevention and wellbeing services are co-ordinated so people get the right support from the right service at the right time.

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Progressing long-term community wellbeing and leisure strategies to support sustainable, community-led services.

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Continue to strengthen carers networks, improving awareness of support available, increasing engagement with carers, and acting on what carers tell us matters to them.

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Ensure a consistent and impactful wellbeing offer to all our workforce.

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Develop progression pathways so staff are able to see how they can progress their careers in Bridgend County Borough Council.

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## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Ensure children know who their social worker is and are informed of any changes in a timely way.

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Develop a Parent Advocacy Network that helps shape service delivery and improvement.

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Increase the opportunities for children and young people to participate and guide the services we provide.

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Embed the Most Significant Change and Signs of Safety practice model to ensure practice is consistently of a good quality standard.

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## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

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Implement the Adult Social Care Workforce Plan which includes recruitment, retention, succession planning, leadership development and workforce wellbeing.

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Ensure all service areas actively capture and respond to the voice of the person and carers.

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Co-produce and implement a Carers Strategy, improving support, assessment, and outcomes for unpaid carers.

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Ensure our Community Mental Health services are evidence based, resourced, and organised to meet need and prevent escalation of need.

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# Prevention

## Quality Standards

“The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is **prevented** whilst ensuring that the best **outcomes** for people are achieved”

“**Resilience within communities** is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including **carers** to learn develop and participate in society”

# Across Social Services

We work with a range of trusted partners to support people to live well and prevent escalation of need.

Our 3 year strategic plans for children and families and adults emphasise the importance of prevention and early intervention in keeping families together, supporting independence and connection to friends, family and community.

## Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

### Local Community Co-ordinators and Community Navigators

Preventative services help people get the right support earlier within their own communities. Community Navigators and Local Community Co-ordinators are an important part of this approach, working alongside third sector partners, community groups and other services.

Local Community Co-ordinators work directly with individuals and families to help them stay independent and prevent or delay the need for more formal care and support. They focus on people's strengths, skills and existing support from family, friends and their local community.

Community Navigators complement this work by helping people find and access local groups, activities, services and third sector support. They provide information, signposting and connections into community opportunities, supporting people to remain connected and build their own resilience.

Demand continues to grow significantly, with adults supported by Local Community Co-ordinators increasing by 32% (from 606 to 797) and children and young people supported increasing by 121% (from 140 to 310) between 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Going forward, the focus will be on strengthening how Local Community Co-ordinators, Community Navigators and other preventative services work together. This will include clearer roles and pathways and strengthened links with community and third sector organisations.

Overall, this approach helps people stay independent, connected and supported within their communities, while reducing or delaying the need for more formal care and support.



## What Matters to our Carers?

A “what matters” conversation is about understanding what is important to each person. These conversations are as important for carers and young carers as they are for the people they look after. They focus on the carer as a person, not just their caring role, making sure their feelings, goals, and hopes are heard.

The Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service helps carers by connecting them to local help. The Council carries out carers’ assessments, while TuVida provides advice, support, and helps carers connect with local and community services.

We seek to understand what each carer needs and getting them the right help as soon as possible. This can include practical help, local groups, and activities to improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness. For young carers, wellbeing sessions give them a safe place to build confidence, make friends, and cope better with challenges.

This year, we have seen a 41% increase in carers’ assessments and have held a number of listening events to understand people’s experiences. We understand that for many carers, navigating the social care system has not been easy and that they have not always felt the Council listened to and acted on their concerns. We are working on a plan with them to address this. In addition, we have recruited a new worker to undertake assessments in Adult Social Care.

### Supporting “*What Matters*” to Carers & Young Carers

#### OUR PARTNER TUVIDA:

- Supported **485** new referrals.
- and, signposted **5917** carers to wellbeing support.

#### THE COUNCIL:

- Supported **852** Young carers with wellbeing opportunities
- **35** assessments for young carers completed during the year.
- **215** assessments for carers of adults completed in the year.

#### NEXT STEPS::

- Build stronger support networks.
- Reach carers who are not yet known to services.
- Help carers access support earlier.
- Work more closely with partners to provide better, joined-up support.

# Young Carers: *We Are Valued Days*

The We Are Valued Days have continued to provide an important opportunity for young carers to have time away from their caring responsibilities, enjoy themselves and spend time with other young people who understand some of the challenges they face.

During 2025-26, 136 young carers attended the We Are Valued Days, supported by local educational settings. Young carers were also encouraged to bring a buddy, helping the days feel welcoming and inclusive and enabling them to enjoy the experience alongside a friend.

The days provide a relaxed and supportive environment with a range of fun and wellbeing activities. Most importantly, they give young carers the opportunity to simply be young people – trying new activities, building friendships, developing confidence and having some valuable time for themselves.

The buddy approach has also helped increase understanding of the young carer role amongst their peers, while ensuring young carers do not feel different or singled out because of their caring responsibilities.

The We Are Valued Days form part of the wider support available through the Bridgend Young Carers Network, helping young carers feel recognised, connected and valued. They complement the wider wellbeing offer, including Young Carer Ambassadors, wellbeing sessions and the Young Carers ID Card.

Impact: The days are helping young carers build positive friendships, reduce isolation, improve confidence and wellbeing, and importantly provide time away from their caring role to focus on themselves and have fun.



## Improving Transition Support for Young People with a Disability

Planning transition early for young people with a disability helps ensure that any changes in support happen gradually, so there are no gaps in care, healthcare, or education. We know for most children moving between Children into Adult services, this is a smooth process with continuity of support. However, we also recognise this is not the case for all families and there are areas for development. To support this, a rapid review of how transition support works was completed. This review made recommendations on how to improve support for children, young people, and their families as they move into adulthood.

The review found that improvements are needed in how transition is overseen, how decisions are made, having clearer processes, joint training for staff, and giving better information to children and families about the transition process. Addressing these findings is one of our priorities for 2026-27.



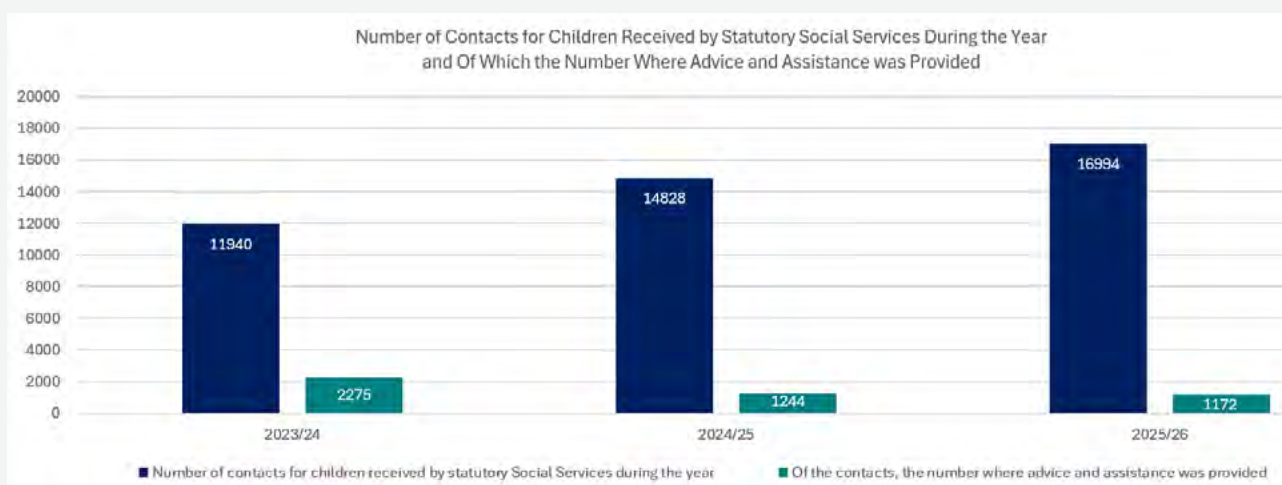


# Children and Family Services

## Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

### Overview of Contact and Care & Support Needs

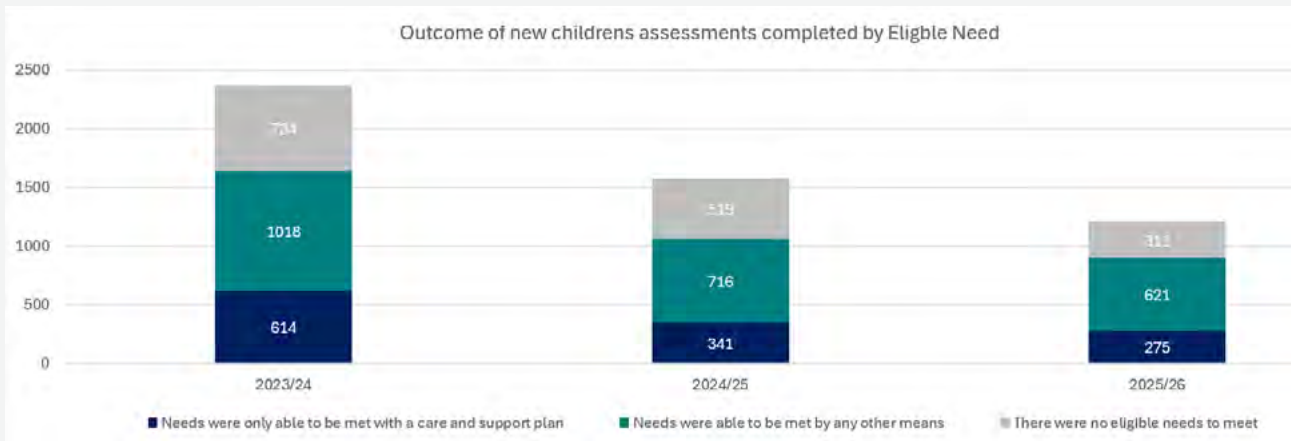
During 2025-26, Children and Family Services received 16,994 contacts, a 15% increase from 14,828 the previous year.



Despite higher numbers of contacts, the proportion progressing to statutory assessment fell from 8% to 7%, reflecting improved screening, decision-making and use of early help support services.

The police remained the highest referrer, consistent with previous years and highlights the importance of strong multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, 1,207 assessments for children and young people were completed, a 23% reduction from 1,576 in the previous year.



This decrease can be attributed in part to the implementation of the Signs of Safety practice framework, which supports earlier and more structured screening of referrals and helps ensure that only children requiring statutory intervention progress to assessment. Signs of Safety has also improved safety planning and decision making by focusing on understanding risks, family strengths, existing support networks, and what matters most to children and their families.

In addition, increased use of Early Help and partnership support may mean that many families' needs are being identified and addressed earlier, reducing the need for statutory assessment while ensuring appropriate support is provided.

## Delivering Support for Families

In 2025–26, our Family Support Commissioning Strategy has helped create a clear, joined up approach to early help and prevention. Services now work more closely with frontline teams, with simpler and more consistent ways to make referrals, better oversight of support, and stronger links with safeguarding, Early Help and CFSS. This includes recommissioning parenting and disability support through Barnardo's and strengthening the support available for children with additional needs and their families and making improvements in how we manage direct payments.

Multi agency working has improved, leading to earlier, better co-ordinated support for children and families and less duplication, particularly for those with complex needs. Work with partners across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region has improved consistency and access to services, including support for emotional wellbeing, neurodiversity, pre birth and complex care.

The voice of children, young people and families are shaping services, highlighting the need for flexible, consistent and relationship based support. Investment in the workforce has supported these changes.

Early signs indicate that more families are being supported without the need for statutory intervention, despite increasing demand.

- Children and Family Services received 16,994 contacts in 2025-26, up 15% from 14,828 in 2024-25.
- The proportion of contacts progressing to a statutory assessment fell from 8% to 7%.
- This means a smaller proportion of families required statutory assessment, despite the increase in contacts.

**CASE STUDY:****GETTING THE RIGHT HELP  
WHEN IT MATTERS**

A family with two children, one of whom had additional needs linked to neurodiversity, was referred for support due to increasing stress within the home, difficulties accessing appropriate services and concerns around family resilience. The parents reported feeling overwhelmed and unsure how to navigate support systems, which was beginning to impact on relationships within the family and the child's emotional wellbeing.

The family were supported through a co-ordinated multi-agency approach involving Early Help, commissioned parenting and disability support services, education and health professionals. A clear plan was developed with the family, focusing on what mattered most to them and identifying practical support that could reduce stress and improve day-to-day stability.

The family accessed targeted parenting support alongside community based provision, while professionals worked together to improve consistency and communication across services.

This ensured support was better aligned to the child's needs.

Over time, parents reported feeling more confident in managing challenges and better able to access the right support at the right time. Relationships within the home improved, school engagement stabilised and the family described feeling more listened to and involved in decision making. The case study highlighted the positive impact of integrated, working in supporting children with additional needs and preventing escalation into more intensive intervention.

## Strengthening Fostering Provision and Local Growth

During 2025-26, we improved fostering services by increasing support for carers, improving placement stability and growing local fostering capacity. This supports the Council's aim of helping more children remain in stable family based care, close to their communities, schools and support networks.

A key development was the introduction of the Placement Support Team, which provides practical and therapeutic support to carers and children seven days a week. The team provides early support, helping to support foster families to continue caring. Support includes direct work with children, advice for carers and out-of-hours support. The service is also using referral trends and carer feedback to better understand pressures and improve support.



We worked with Foster Wales to strengthen local recruitment and raise awareness of fostering in Bridgend. Cabinet approved and promoted the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for foster carers, kinship carers and Special Guardians, and progressed a No Detriment policy for kinship carers who become Special Guardians.

The number of approved foster carers remained stable at 63 in March 2026. There was a small increase in available fostering placements, reversing the previous decline in capacity. Carers also reported improvements in some areas of support, although consistency remains a priority.

Priorities for 2026-27 include further developing the Placement Support Team to address the issues that matter to foster carers, strengthening support and training for carers, improving placement stability, increasing local fostering capacity and progressing Step-Down Fostering, Support Care and an enhanced Parent and Child offer which diversify the offer in Bridgend.

## Promoting Resilient Communities

### Supporting independence and Keeping Families Together

Early Help and CFSS strengthened the offer during 2025–26, improving access to support, delivering strong outcomes for families, and helping more children remain safely at home through timely, targeted intervention.

An improved screening process made it easier for families to access support, enhanced joint working with partners, sped up decisions, reduced duplication, and strengthened support for children with disabilities and their families.

#### SCREENING TEAM

- 2,661 contacts received
- 2,242 assessments completed (84%)
- 42% of referrals directed to advice, community support or commissioned services rather than statutory intervention

#### EARLY HELP HUBS

- 380 referrals received since September 2025
- Most families supported without escalation
- No repeat referrals in the last six months

#### CFSS

- Supported 322 children at risk of entering care
- 94% remained safely at home

#### RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

- 86% of families remained out of care six months after support ended



We improved support for teenagers this year. The Adolescent Crisis Team and Safer Connections provided targeted support to young people experiencing family breakdown, exploitation and other crises.

Through the use of trauma informed based approaches, services helped to build family resilience, with feedback from families indicating that they felt listened to, understood and well supported throughout their involvement.

### CASE STUDY:

## ADOLESCENT CRISIS TEAM

A 15-year-old young person was referred to the Adolescent Crisis Team (ACT) following a significant breakdown in family relationships. Conflict at home had escalated, affecting their parent and two younger siblings, both aged under 10. There was an immediate risk that the young person would be unable to remain safely at home and could enter local authority care.

ACT responded immediately to help resolve and de-escalate the crisis. The team undertook intensive visits with the young person and their family, providing practical and emotional support. They helped the family understand what was contributing to the crisis and developed strategies to manage conflict, improve communication and maintain safety within the home.

ACT also co-ordinated support with the wider professional network to ensure everyone was

working towards a consistent plan.

As a result, the immediate crisis was de-escalated, family relationships improved, and the young person was able to remain safely at home. The family reported feeling listened to and better equipped to manage future difficulties. This prevented the situation from escalating further and reduced the likelihood of the young person entering care.

## Key Priorities for 2026–27:

- Improve timeliness of screening and access to Early Help.
- Strengthen quality assurance.
- Embed consistent practice.
- Expand community-based support services

# Supporting Children to Remain with their Families or Return Home Safely

There was positive progress in 2025-26 with our strategy to support more families to live together safely. There are fewer children in care, more children remaining safely with their families or returning home, and clearer, more consistent care plans.

- The number of children in care was 316 at March 2026, 17 fewer than the previous year, continuing a steady decline since 2023.
- 22 children returned home.
- Only 16% of children receiving statutory support required admission to care.
- More children are remaining safely with their families
- During the year, decision-making for children improved, successful returns home increased, and joint working across services strengthened.

Some children need additional support to meet their more complex needs. To address this, we will:

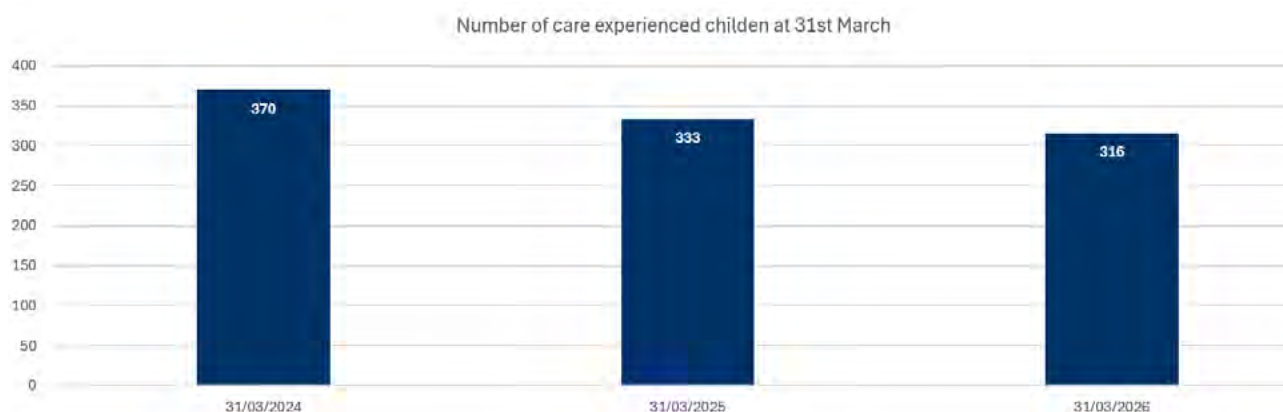
- Establish a specialist team using 'invest to save' Council investment to provide intensive support.
- Strengthen oversight of connected person care arrangements.
- Improve the use of short-term residential care as part of plans to support children to return home.
- Build staff confidence in managing more challenging situations.





# Care Experienced Children

The number of Care Experienced Children (CEC) has reduced by 5% over the past year, from 333 to 316 children, a decrease of 17 children.



The reduction has been supported by stronger permanence planning, timely decision-making and effective multi-agency working, helping more children achieve stable outcomes.

## Placement Commissioning Strategy, Children and Family Services 2025-2030

The Placement Commissioning Strategy, approved by Cabinet in March 2026, outlines how the Council will ensure sufficient suitable accommodation, care and support for care experienced children and young people. It aims to expand local options so children can remain connected to their families, schools and communities where possible, while also supporting safe family reunification when appropriate.

The strategy focuses on strengthening in-house services and not for profit options, improving stability and outcomes, increasing choice and removing reliance on for-profit placements in line with the [Health and Social Care \(Wales\) Act \(2025\)](#).

Operating Without Registration (OWR) arrangements reduced during the year. In 2024-

25, there were 5 children in 7 OWR placements, reducing to 4 children in 4 placements in 2025-26. No new OWR arrangements have started since November 2025.

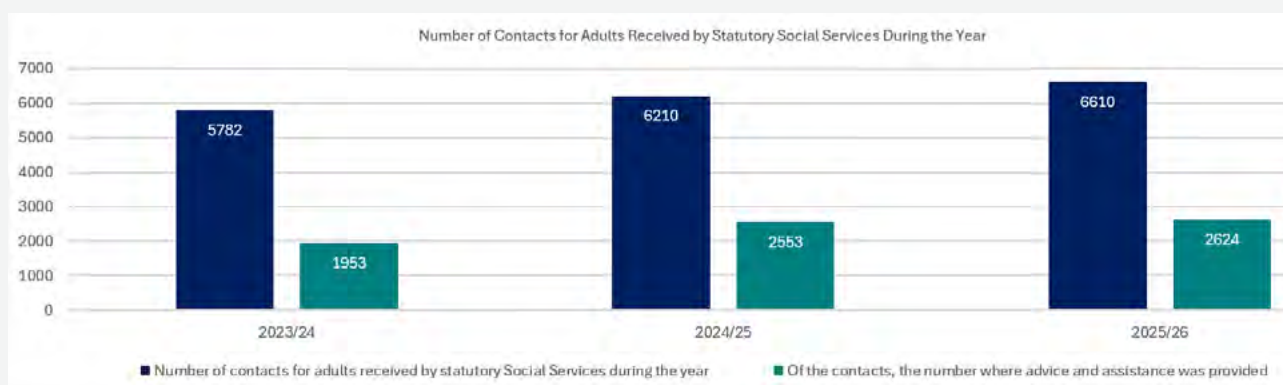
This is a positive trend, helping to ensure children and young people are cared for in regulated services that have been inspected and can provide safer, stable care.

# Adult Social Care

## Preventing the Escalation of Care & Support

### Overview of Contact and Care & Support Needs

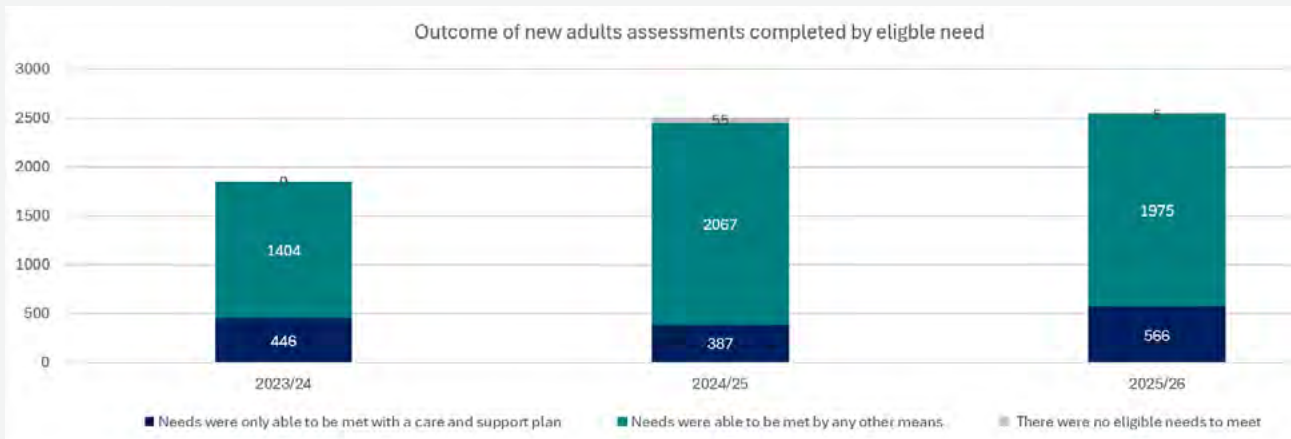
Contacts to Adult Social Care increased by 6%, in 2025-26, rising from 6,210 to 6,610. Health remain the main source of referrals, reflecting continued system pressures.



The proportion of contacts progressing to assessment has remained stable (40% compared to 41% last year). Whilst this demonstrates our ongoing focus providing early advice, information and preventative support the overall numbers of assessments have increased as contacts increased.

Most people do, however, receive the help they need at first contact without requiring a formal assessment, supporting our early intervention and prevention approach. We will be undertaking work to determine if we can support even more people preventatively.

Assessments increased by 2%, from 2,509 in 2024-25 to 2,546 in 2025-26. The increased numbers highlight the challenges of managing the needs of an ageing population and the pressures in the health and social care system.



The proportion of assessments leading to a care and support plan increased from 16% to 22% whilst more work is needed, this may reflect growing complexity of need.

## Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC)

ARC is a key early intervention mental health service in Bridgend, providing accessible advice, guidance, and practical support to people experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties. The service supports Welsh Government priorities around prevention, early intervention, recovery, and reducing pressure on GPs and secondary mental health services.

### ARC SERVICES 2025–26

- **578** Advice & Guidance contacts
- **152** Employment Support referrals
- Growing support for neurodiverse individuals
- Strong employment outcomes: **65 people remained in or returned to work**
- New direct pathways into Local Primary Mental Health Support Service (LPMHSS)

We are carrying out a joint review of the ARC service with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

This review will explore how the service model can be developed and improved. It will involve engagement with key stakeholders, most importantly people who use the service, and consider practical ways to make access to mental health support easier and more effective throughout the county borough.



## Unpaid Carers Strategic Group

We have established a Carers Steering Group to improve our systems and processes and ensure that more unpaid carers are identified and offered an assessment. Each social work team now has a dedicated link worker to promote good practice and improve support for unpaid carers across services.

At our listening events earlier this year we clearly heard carers views. Using this feedback, we are developing an action plan and training programme. The action plan and guidance will be shared with carers to ensure they shape future improvements.

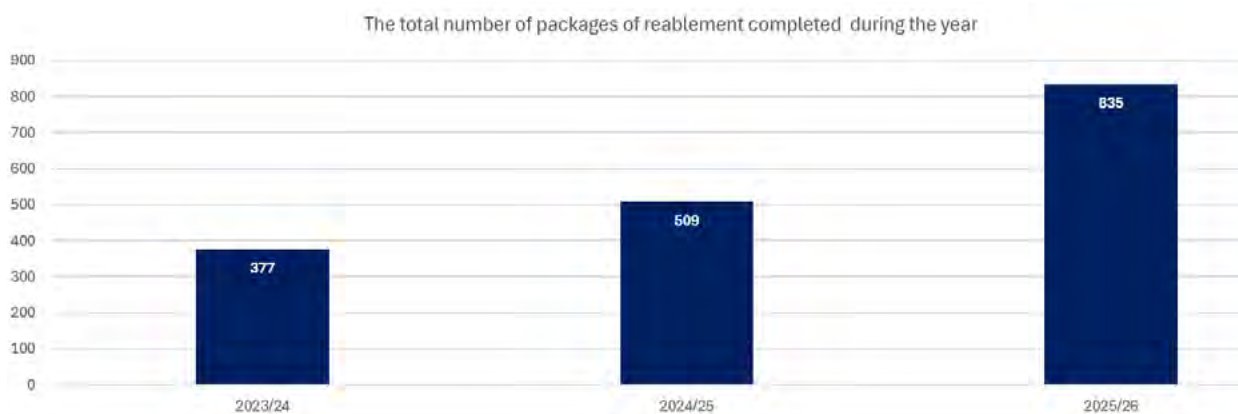
[Here](#) is a video from one of our listening events, bringing carers and professionals together. We want to make sure carers feel heard and valued.





# Supporting Independence: Care and Support at Home

The Council's care and support at home service is a reablement service which helps people regain confidence and independence after illness, injury or a stay in hospital. It supports people to rebuild daily living skills so they can do more for themselves and reduce the need for ongoing care and support.



A total of 835 reablement packages were completed in 2025-26, representing a 121% increase over the past three years. This growth is a deliberate strategy as we aim to ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity to retain or regain independence. Reablement outcomes were:

|                                                                                                     | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Reablement Packages that <b>Mitigated</b> the need for support                                      | 67%     | 56%     | 50%     |
| Reablement Packages that <b>Reduced</b> the need for support                                        | 14%     | 17%     | 19%     |
| % of Reablement packages that <b>Maintained</b> the need for the same level of support              | 14%     | 16%     | 20%     |
| % of Reablement packages that <b>neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated</b> the need for support | 5%      | 11%     | 11%     |

As the service continues to expand access to short-term reablement support, more residents are benefiting from interventions that help them remain as independent as possible. The service is part of our care and support at home service which delivers excellent person-centred care. We have also developed other initiatives through our integrated initiatives such as our 'bed to chair' project supported by multi-disciplinary teams so everyone has the opportunity to retain as much independence as possible.

## CASE STUDY:

# PROMOTING & SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE

## Bed to Chair to Independence Hospital Avoidance and Prevention



*A reablement approach, focused therapy and the right support at the right time helped Charles regain his independence.*



### Charles (88)

- Declining mobility and significant risk of falls
- Oedema affecting his legs, limiting mobility and access to wet room facilities
- Reliant on stairlift and a package of care



### CHALLENGE

Declining mobility and significant risk of falls

Oedema affecting his legs, limiting mobility and access to wet room facilities

Reliant on stairlift and a package of care



### INTERVENTION

- Occupational therapy assessment
- Transfer training
- Appropriate use of Zimmer frame
- Stairlift optimisation
- Community nursing support reducing oedema



### OUTCOME

- Accesses upstairs safely
- Shows independently
- Reduced risk of falls
- Avoided hospital admission
- Reduced reliance on formal care



### IMPACT ACHIEVED

- 182 Hours** of domiciliary care avoided annually
- Hospital Admission Avoided**
- Reduced Community Nursing Demand**



Prevention and reablement interventions enabled Charles to regain independence, avoid hospital admission and reduce ongoing care requirements.

Right support • Right time • Right outcome • Better for Charles • Better for Bridgend

[www.bridgend.gov.uk](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk)



# Supporting People Living with Dementia and their Carers

## Improved Pathways to Primary and Secondary Mental Health Care & Support

A new weekly multidisciplinary team (MDT) process has been set up in Older Adult Mental Health Services following learning from a recent safeguarding case to improve communication and coordination between community teams and the Mental Health Liaison Team, which supports care homes and patients at the Princess of Wales Hospital.

The Liaison Team updates on patients in care homes and hospital wards, helping ensure issues are not missed.

We recognise the particular strain on carers who's loved ones are living with dementia and are working creatively to provide person-centred support.



## SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY: THE TEATIME CLUB

The Teatime Club runs late afternoon to support at a time when people living with dementia often experience increased confusion, restlessness and agitation.

The purpose of the group is to provide meaningful engagement and support during this difficult period, helping individuals feel calmer and more settled.

The club offers a safe, structured and welcoming environment with activities such as refreshments, music, reminiscence, crafts and light movement.

These activities aim to reduce distress and promote wellbeing through social interaction and gentle stimulation.

The group also supports carers by offering reassurance and a short period of respite at a particularly challenging time of day.

## SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY: SPECIALIST INTEGRATED DEMENTIA SERVICE AT TY PEN Y BONT

We have developed a community based “outreach” service. This service was designed to help people living with dementia or other cognitive difficulties access the support and services they need early and at the right time.

The service redesign was led by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a Team Leader, Assistant Team Leader, Day Service Assistants, Mental Health Nurse, Occupational Therapist and Occupational Therapy Assistant.

### As part of this work, the team:

- Reviewed the dementia resource at Bridgend Resource Centre with a view to developing a community-based outreach model.
- Introduced a Dementia Step-Up/Step-Down Tool in October 2025.
- Developed a Dementia Hub.

### Key outcomes of the service are:

- Between April and August 2025, the service supported 91 people living with dementia and their carers, who reported increased resilience and confidence in their caring role.
- 38 hospital admissions were avoided by providing support at the right time.
- The team provided 64 aids and adaptations to help people remain safe and independent at home.
- 32 behaviour plans are developed.

# Prevention:

## 2026-27 Key Priorities

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### ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

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Improve transition between children and adult services, progressing the recommendations from the rapid review and integrating with health and education.

Strengthen support for unpaid carers and young carers by increasing the numbers of carers assessments and delivering the carers action plan.

Develop community hubs and local services that help people stay independent and connected.

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### CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Embed support for foster carers to prevent placement breakdowns providing children with stability whilst in care.

Deliver key priorities in relation to foster care recruitment and retention including Step Down foster carers, place based support.

To implement the regional approach to emotional wellbeing, specifically the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Connect Wellbeing panel, which brings partners together to provide the right support from the right service at the right time.

To improve information advice and support to children and families, strengthening quality and the impact of services, expanding community based support.

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### ADULT SOCIAL CARE

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Implement actions arising from the independent evaluation of the adult social care operating model to ensure Information, Advice and Assistance are delivered consistently.

Address increasing need for social care preventatively through enhanced reablement and targeted prevention programmes.

Transform Learning Disability services, including transition, accommodation, progression planning, and daytime opportunities.

Review Occupational Therapy and Sensory Support Services to ensure effective preventative support and independence-focused pathways.

Develop accommodation plans that ensure services are available locally and meet future demand.

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# Partnership and Integration

## Quality Standards

“Effective **partnerships** are in place to commission and fully deliver fully **integrated**, high quality sustainable outcomes for people”

“People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as **equal partners**”

# Working as One Social Services and Wellbeing Approach

Our social services and wellbeing operating model has effective partnerships at its heart. Partnerships are key to delivering seamless person-centred services.



## Regional Arrangements

We work closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, Merthyr Tydfil Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, and third sector partners as part of the [Regional Partnership Board](#), which is chaired by Bridgend Council's Deputy Leader.

The regional Adult Services Programme Borad has set its priorities for the next five years with a focus on dementia, unpaid carers, mental health, learning disabilities, older people, neurodiversity and people with sensory impairments and disabilities.

The Children's Programme board launched its "Whole System, Whole Heart" strategy which highlights a shared commitment to support emotional wellbeing, early support for families, help for care experienced children, and support for children with disabilities or complex needs.

We are also part of the Cwm [Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board](#). This is the

statutory safeguarding board which commissions Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs) and oversees the implementation of learning arising from the reviews.

A priority for 2025-26 was the launch and implementation of Regional Threshold and Eligibility Support Guidance to ensure all partners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and how services can be accessed. The guidance explains when children and young people need safeguarding support and at what level. It helps all agencies act early, make consistent decisions, work together, and improve protection for vulnerable children across the region.



# Local Arrangements

The Bridgend **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH)** brings together Children and Family Services, Adult Safeguarding, South Wales Police, education, and probation services. By working together in one place, partners can respond more quickly and effectively to safeguarding concerns.

In Adult Social Care, we work closely with the Health Board through our Community Resource Team (CRT) and Integrated Cluster Network Teams. The CRT provides short term health and social care services to support hospital discharge and prevent admission to hospital. The network teams support people in the community, especially those with long-term health conditions. The service is organised into three local networks linked to GP surgeries. This helps people get care close to home and allows support to change as their needs change. Nine different professions work together meaning

we can respond quickly, prevent problems from getting worse, and look at people's overall needs. We also involve families, so people do not have to repeat their story to different professionals and have more choice and control over their care.

We have approved a new formal governance arrangement - a Section 33 agreement - with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board which signals our lasting commitment to our integrated model for community services in Bridgend.

## Third Sector Arrangements

Our Prevention and Wellbeing Service works in partnership with third sector organisations, Awen Cultural Trust and Halo Leisure Trust to provide leisure, cultural and wellbeing opportunities that help people stay healthy, independent and connected.

Through targeted services, leisure support, referral programmes and community initiatives, people of all ages are supported to improve their health and wellbeing, build confidence and access activities that enable them to make positive choices and live independently.

During 2025–26, we

worked with partners to expand accessible community-based activities for unpaid carers, young carers and their families. Shaped by feedback from carers, people living with dementia and older adults, these opportunities supported wellbeing, social connections and access to local services.

### People Supported via Partnership Arrangements

#### WELLBEING MEMBERSHIPS

**2,360** Supporting access to health and wellbeing opportunities

#### FREE SWIM OFFER

**21,683** Community free swimming attendances

#### SUPER AGERS PARTNERSHIP

**3,700** Older people supported to stay active and connected

#### NATIONAL EXERCISE REFERRAL SCHEME

**1,900** People supported through targeted health pathways

#### LIBRARY & CULTURAL SERVICES

**13** Welsh Public Library Standards achieved

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Highest** Per capita event attendance in Wales



Partnership working has strengthened referral pathways and increased access to physical activity, dementia-friendly support, wellbeing sessions and community events. Feedback from carers continues to be positive, with many valuing the opportunity to connect with others

and access support in welcoming community settings.

In 2026–27, we will focus on developing sustainable, community-led wellbeing and leisure opportunities that continue to meet the needs of carers and local communities.

## Effective Partnerships

### National Framework for the Commissioning of Care

Following the introduction of the National Framework for the Commissioning of Care and Support in Wales, we undertook a self-assessment against the standards set out.

As a result we have made a number of improvements including changes to our contract templates and contract monitoring arrangements. This has also resulted in additional investment into our Commissioning Team. There has been a recommissioning of care and support at

home services this year with new contractual arrangements coming into effect from 1st April 2026. The commissioning emphasises the quality of service and outcomes for individuals supported by care providers.

### Emergency Duty Partnership

Following the Care Inspectorate Wales improvement check of Children and Family Services in June 2025, there was a recommendation we provide assurance that emergency duty arrangements are effective across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.

An action plan has been developed to ensure improvements, including improved communication between the regional Emergency Duty Team (EDT) and local authority safeguarding teams.

## Strengthening Community Navigation and Early Support Pathways

We aim to enable community groups and organisations to have their voice heard. We work closely with:

**BAVO:** Building resilient and coordinated communities through developing cross sector working with the third sector to support community resourcefulness and resilience.

**Bridgend Inclusive Network Group:** An umbrella group of organisations who represent children and young people who are differently abled as well as their carers

**Young Carers Network:** A platform for young carers and young adult carers, the network is driven by young carer ambassadors.

**Healthy Living Network:** There is a focus on enhancing community support and services enabling local community members to remain independent for as long as possible. The Feel Good for Life programme supporting people living with dementia or cognitive impairment

and carers and supports 100+ people. The programme has evidence of 65% increase in confidence levels regarding visiting leisure facilities.

**Ageing Well Network:** Protecting and promoting older people's rights, making them feel an integral part of the community and recognising that every person has inherent value regardless of age

## Active 4 Life: Supporting Activities Through Town and Community Partnerships

Town and Community Councils support Active 4 Life activities during school holidays. Funding from partners has made it easier for children and young people to take part in holiday activities in their local communities.

The programme has had a positive impact, shown by high participation and continued involvement from families and partners. A total of 2499 individual children and young people were supported in 2025-26, with 7930 attendances recorded.

Attendance data, feedback from families, and

continued support from partners show that the programme helps children and young people stay active, connect with others, and remain engaged during school holidays. Working with Town and Community Councils has been a strength, allowing activities to be offered within local communities.

## People As Equal Partners Working with Partners and People to Develop Community Opportunities

The Bridgend Young Carers Network has helped more children, young people and families take part in community wellbeing, leisure and support activities. Here is a snapshot of support provided via the Young Carers Network:

## Bridgend Young Carers Network

The Bridgend Young Carers Network, led by young carer ambassadors aged 11–25, continued to provide opportunities for young carers to have their voices heard and help shape future services and activities

**852** Young Carers ID cards rolled out

**227** Primary school children involved

**615** Comprehensive and Young Adult Carers involved

**64** Partner organisations supporting the Young Carers network

**33** Young Carer Ambassadors

**23** Opportunities where Young Carers have volunteered or supported events

**136** Carers attended the 'We Are Valued' days, supported by educational settings

**160** Young Carers attended the Network Day

**403** Halo Young Carers memberships

**927** Halo Young Carers household memberships

Work with BING and partner organisations has helped more than 220 children and young adults with disabilities, along with their families, to take part in inclusive wellbeing and leisure activities through community programmes and referrals. BING has also supported 27 community organisations, created 30 community opportunities, and supported over 80 individuals with a disability to get involved.

Participation data, feedback from those involved, and ongoing partnership work all show a positive impact. There are now improved opportunities for young carers and families to access support in their local communities. In the coming year, priorities include strengthening the network, increasing participation in events, and developing more inclusive, community led opportunities.

## Library, Culture and Community Hubs

Work to consult and engage people about future priorities for Library, Culture, and Community Hub services has been commissioned through partnerships, strategic discussions, and early community mapping.

The first Community Hub Strategic Board met in February, bringing together a range of partners, strengthening partnership working and strategic oversight. Feasibility tenders have also been awarded and expressions of interest submitted for future capital funding opportunities to support community hub development. Town and Community Councils has been a strength, allowing activities to be offered within local communities.





# Children and Family Services

## People As Equal Partners

### Bridgend Youth Voice Forum

We support the Bridgend Youth Voice, a forum for care experienced young people and care leavers aged 12 to 21. The forum gives young people a chance to share their views and help shape services that affect them.

The forum is run by TGP Cymru, with support from the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer and works with national organisations, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales, to improve outcomes for children in care.

To recognise the achievements of care experienced children and young people, a range of activities were held over the past year. This

included a celebration day at Pencoed College, where children, young people and their families and carers took part in a variety of activities.

To find out how our work had made a difference over the year, the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing met with the Youth Forum and asked them three important questions. Their answers identified a number of key themes.

#### 1. What has gone well?

##### Supportive relationships

- Carers, personal advisors and care home staff provided support.
- The Advocacy Service is helpful.
- Forum works well in ensuring voices are heard.

##### Education, skills and future goals

- Young people reported doing well academically.
- Supported to pursue interests and hobbies.
- Supported to obtain necessary training for future employment.

##### Preparation for Independence

- Provided with support to move to independent living.
- Supported with navigating housing and next steps.

#### 2. What has not gone so well?

##### Lack of Information and Guidance

- More timely information needed on further education options.
- Don't always know who or how to ask for support.
- More signposting and reference points needed.

##### Inconsistent Support

- Changes in social worker, hard to build trust.
- Social Workers not always available.
- Changes in social workers not always explained.

##### Placement Stability

- Placement moves.
- Moved at short notice.

#### 3. How can the support be improved?

##### Better planning and preparation

- Placement moves should be planned and explained

##### Communication

- More timely responses from professionals.
- Communication of changes.

##### Support and Communication

- Fewer changes in social workers.
- Social workers should meet the young person first, before reading their profile.
- More support needed for care leavers.
- Support should extend beyond 9–5, especially evenings.

**These comments were shared by forum members with the Director during the meeting.**



# Adult Social Care

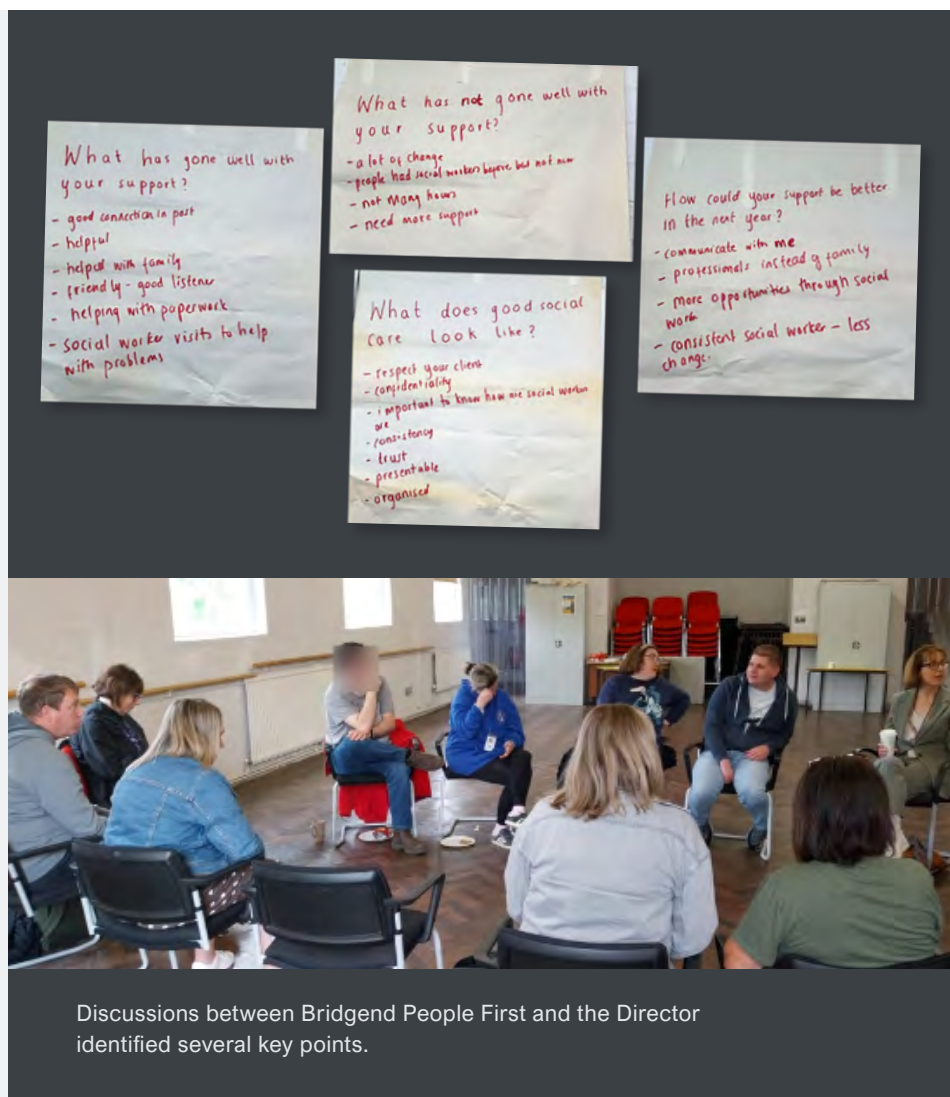
## People As Equal Partners

### People First Bridgend

People First Bridgend is a third sector organisation that supports adults with learning disabilities in Bridgend. They empower people to understand and use their rights, access services, and take an active part in their communities.

We work closely with People First Bridgend and to understand the difference this partnership has made over the past year, the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing met with the group to discuss a number of questions.

Before the Director's meeting, the group met to talk through the questions and help everyone feel prepared and confident to give their own answers.



Discussions between Bridgend People First and the Director identified several key points.

#### What has gone well during the year?

- People feel supported and safe
- Confidence and independence are growing
- Advocacy makes a big difference
- People are active in their community
- People First are supporting a parent to set up a Parent and Carer Forum

#### What has not gone well in the year?

- No allocated worker, rely on duty workers
- Difficulties accessing transport links
- Some activities are not suitable / interesting
- Limited employment opportunities

#### How can we make things better?

- Consistent Social Work Support
- Accessible (easy read) information across the Council
- Training on travel skills to further support independence
- Day time activities that suit our interests
- More volunteering and employment opportunities to be made available

# Partnership & Integration:

## 2026-27 Key Priorities

### ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Involve people with lived experience in designing and improving services.

Strengthen our work with Halo Leisure, Awen Cultural Trust , BAVO and other key network / partners.

Progress integrated community hubs providing local access to health, wellbeing support and community services.

Improving partnership data and impact reporting.

### CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Training for partner agencies across the region to support consistent application of the threshold guidance.

Involve partners from education, health, police, parents and carers in our work to safely support more families to stay together.

To continue to develop and improve working practices between partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and families.

To review support for our care-experienced children and care leavers by reviewing our 15+ team and explore opportunities around developing lifelong links approach involving key partners.

### ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Lead joint reviews and service redesign with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board including Assisted Recovery in the Community (ARC), Continuing Health Care (CHC), Section 117, Section 28A and Bridgend Resource Centre arrangements.

Embed integrated management arrangements and governance structures within CRT and the Community Networks with strengthened leadership capacity.

Strengthen collaboration with housing, health, third sector and community partners.



# Wellbeing

## Quality Standards

“People are protected and **safeguarded** from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm”

“People are supported to actively **manage their wellbeing** and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and **live independently** for as long as possible”

# Across Social Services

Wellbeing is supported through a range of services, activities and safeguarding arrangements that help people stay healthy, safe, independent and connected to their communities.

## People are Protected and Safeguarded

### The Corporate Safeguarding Board

The Corporate Safeguarding Board oversees how the Council corporately protects children and adults at risk. It makes sure all parts of the Council manage safeguarding effectively and follow the law, including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

An Internal Audit report for 2025-26 confirmed that the Board is well established and effectively oversees safeguarding across the Council. We have introduced safeguarding self-assessments across directorates. These help services review their own strengths and areas for improvement using a simple rating system to identify and ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding across the Council.

We have raised awareness of safeguarding across the wider workforce by updating intranet guidance, promoting referral processes, and improving communication between the Board, services, and partners. This helps ensure safeguarding is understood and embedded across all areas of Council work.

### Training and Development: Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs)

In 2025-26, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board published 2 SUSRs relating to Bridgend Adults: 1 [Domestic Homicide Review](#) (2022) and 1 [Adult Safeguarding Review](#) (2021). There were no SUSRs for children published this year.

Learning from the reviews included raising awareness of domestic violence, mental health and suicide support across the region including preventative education in schools for children and young people. Learning also included educating education and social care staff on identifying the indicators of domestic violence, mental health and suicide for children, adults and families.

Over 2025-26 the Regional Safeguarding Board has taken learning from its quality assurance activity and SUSR's into its annual training and work program for 2026-27. Focussing on aligning the safeguarding training the with Wales Safeguarding Procedures and ensuring the areas of Domestic Violence, Mental health and Suicide awareness take the focus. The Board is developing it's 2026-2029 strategic plan which will be published later this year.

In Bridgend, we are implementing the regional exploitation strategy for children and young people which will be reviewed as part of the Board's annual quality assurance workplan for 2026-27.

A safeguarding review in North Wales has also been considered within Bridgend and across the region to ensure the learning identified within that report is taken forward in all parts of Wales. A sub-group of the corporate safeguarding board has been developed to ensure the actions identified within the review are implemented in Bridgend, providing further protection to our children and young people.

# Children and Family Services

## People are Protected and Safeguarded

### Implementing the Regional Exploitation Strategy

Since September 2025, a regional exploitation pathway, guidance, and processes have been introduced. Multi-agency training, staff briefings, and member updates have supported the rollout, alongside a local partnership workstream over the past year. The strategy is supported by guidance for social workers and ACT which provides intensive support to young people and families facing exploitation risks.

#### CASE STUDY:

### MULTI AGENCY INTERVENTION & IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Young Person B first came to the attention of the local authority in September 2024 after an incident involving anti-social behaviour. Over the following months, they were involved in several similar incidents, including criminal damage, disorderly behaviour in public, and causing nuisance to local residents and businesses.

In response, agencies put a structured plan in place to address their anti-social behaviour. However, during mid to late 2025, concerns continued. Young Person B was still involved in incidents such as criminal damage and behaviour that caused distress to others. At the same time, there were growing worries about Young Person B's safety and wellbeing. They were reported missing on several occasions and were spending time with people who placed them at risk.

Due to these concerns, a multi-agency meeting was held and safeguarding procedures were started. By December 2025, the case moved onto the Child Sexual Exploitation family pathway due to concerns about the peer group, substance misuse, and ongoing missing episodes. During this period, Young Person B was also not attending mainstream school due to exclusion.

A range of targeted support was put in place. Young Person B received support from Youth Justice services and began attending an education setting. They also became involved in positive activities, including mechanics and training, which gave them structure and a positive focus. Progress was supported by strong relationship based work, particularly the trust Young Person B developed with their social worker.

Since these interventions were introduced, there has been significant improvement. Young Person B has not been reported missing for several months, has re-engaged with education and continues to take part in activities.

#### Family feedback:

*The family report that Young Person B is now calmer and no longer going missing. This has reduced stress within the home, allowing family members to relax and focus on each other and their work. They are now able to work shifts without worrying about Young Person B's safety. They also shared that Young Person B has developed a strong interest in training, which has been a very positive outlet.*



# Children Safeguarding Enquiries

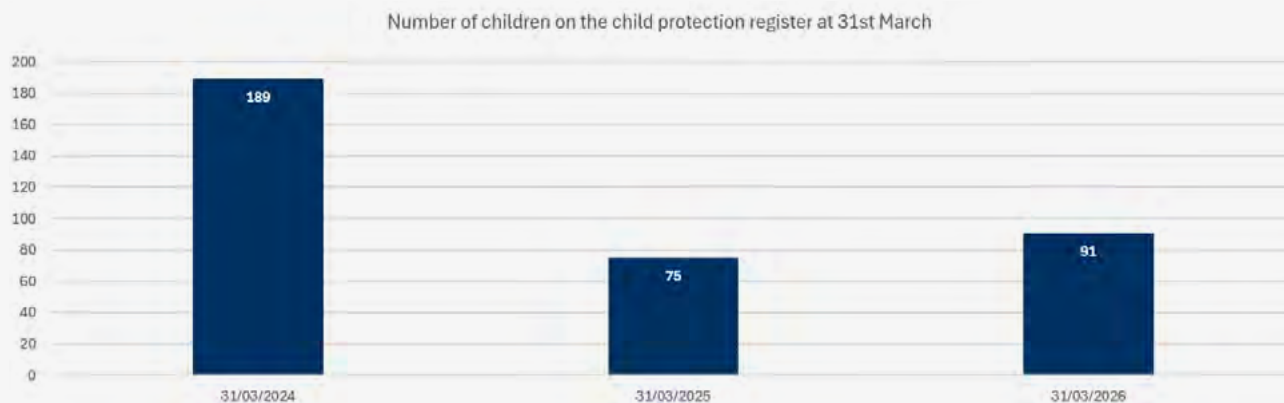
Over the last year, the number of initial safeguarding strategy meetings fell slightly by 3%, from 1,024 to 997. Fewer cases went on to require further safeguarding action, those progressing to Section 47 enquiries reduced by 9% and those progressing to an initial child protection conferences reduced by 30%.



This reflects a more proportionate response, with statutory intervention used only when necessary. Work with partner agencies, including reflective learning sessions and the use of Signs of Safety mapping has supported more consistent, effective and well-informed multi-agency decision-making.

# Child Protection Registrations

At the end of March 2026, 91 children were on the Child Protection Register (CPR), compared with 75 at the same time last year.



The introduction of the Signs of Safety framework, alongside a more stable and experienced workforce, has strengthened risk assessment, planning and decision making. CPR numbers are now more closely aligned with regional and Welsh averages.



# Promoting Children's Engagement and Consistent Record Keeping in Case Conferences

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service has taken steps to increase young people's attendance at their reviews by developing tools and approaches that make the process more accessible. This includes creating an animation to help children and their families understand what a Signs of Safety Child Protection Conference is and what to expect. The service has also introduced an online feedback system using QR codes, allowing participants to share their experiences. This has been in place since February 2026 and is based on research, helping the service to better understand and improve how meetings are experienced.

Alongside this, the IRO Service has engaged directly with children and young people through forums and events, and this feedback has helped shape the co-produced IRO Pledge to Young People.

The service places strong emphasis on ensuring the child's voice is central. Preparation before meetings has increased to help children feel more able to take part, for example by offering

advocacy, flexible ways of attending (including virtual or partial attendance), and opportunities to share views separately. Children's views and wishes are consistently included in reports and decision making. Where children are unable to attend, their views are still represented through other means, such as trusted adults or direct work carried out by social workers and follow-up communication is provided through child-friendly letters and resources.

## EXAMPLE OF FEEDBACK FROM A YOUNG PERSON WHO RECENTLY ATTENDED A CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE:

*"It was okay. I don't like people much; I have social anxiety but don't mind talking. The building was okay. I was given lots of options for speaking and sharing my views."*

### How the Service Responded to the Feedback:

As the young person also reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of attendees in the meeting, the IRO team is taking steps to improve practice by limiting professional attendance where appropriate, ensuring representation through a single spokesperson, and critically reviewing attendee lists to ensure they are proportionate to the decision-making requirements of the meeting.

# Adult Social Care

## People are Protected and Safeguarded

### Safeguarding Team

Over the past year, Bridgend's Adult Safeguarding Team has performed strongly both locally and regionally, and is leading developments for the Regional Safeguarding Board. Several approaches developed in Bridgend, including the safeguarding consultation process, are now being adopted by other local authorities.

The team is responding to concerns more quickly, providing proportionate support and carrying out thorough enquiries. Lead Co-ordinators now oversee Police Protection Notices (PPNs), MARAC and MAPPA processes, strengthening professional oversight and improving support for people at risk.

In HMP Parc, the team's work has received positive feedback, particularly the contribution of the Occupational Therapist, the Significant Attempts Group and the STEPS Project, which uses peer support and lived experience. Together, these initiatives have helped reduce violence and suicide attempts within the prison.

#### CASE STUDY:

### SAFEGUARDING BEST PRACTICE

An 18-year-old care leaver entering custody for the first time was referred to the Severe Self-Harm Rapid Response Panel due to a history of serious self-harm and suicide attempts.

A multi-agency plan was put in place to manage risk, promote wellbeing and build on the individual's strengths. Support included safety planning, family contact, access to positive activities and emotional wellbeing support.

Despite challenges linked to court delays and

uncertainty, the individual engaged well with services and developed positive relationships with professionals. As a result, risk was better managed, wellbeing improved and plans were put in place to support future stability and resettlement.



# HMP Parc Social Work Team

The HMP Parc Social Work Team has strengthened its relationship with prison staff through joint working and training, helping staff better understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

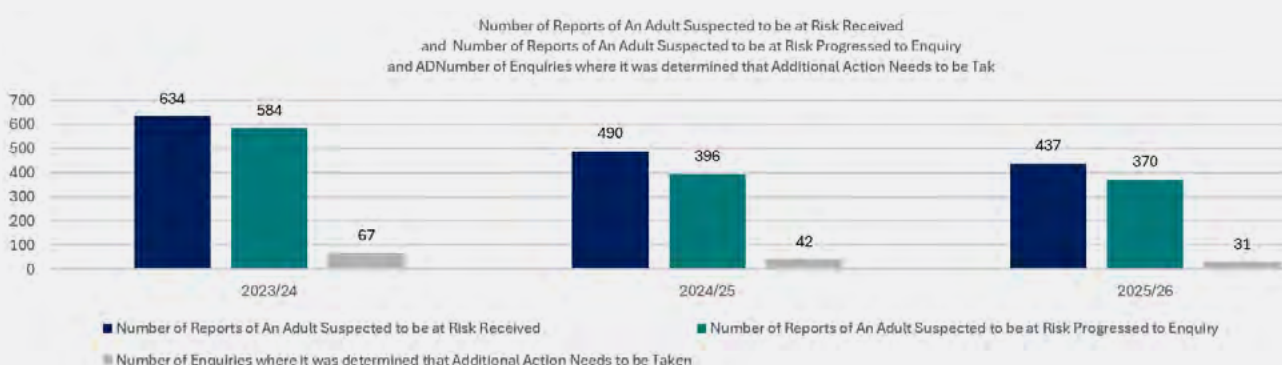
The team is now fully integrated within the prison, providing advice and support across all areas and helping prisoners access the right support at the right time.

The introduction of a Significant Attempts of Suicide and Self-Harm Forum has improved support for high-risk prisoners through tailored plans and timely interventions. This has

contributed to a reduction in violence.

Strong safeguarding arrangements are maintained through regular partnership meetings, with the prison's Safeguarding Lead actively who is involved in Safeguarding Board discussions and working closely with MASH to seek advice and share good practice.

## Safeguarding Reports



During 2025-26, the team received 437 contacts, compared with 490 in 2024-25, a decrease of 11%.

This reduction is due to the consultation process now being well established within the team. Professionals are encouraged to discuss concerns with the team before deciding whether an Adult at Risk (AAR) referral is needed. As a result, the Adult at Risk referrals received by the team are now more appropriate and consistent, with a high proportion progressing to an enquiry.

# Learning Disability Safeguarding Group

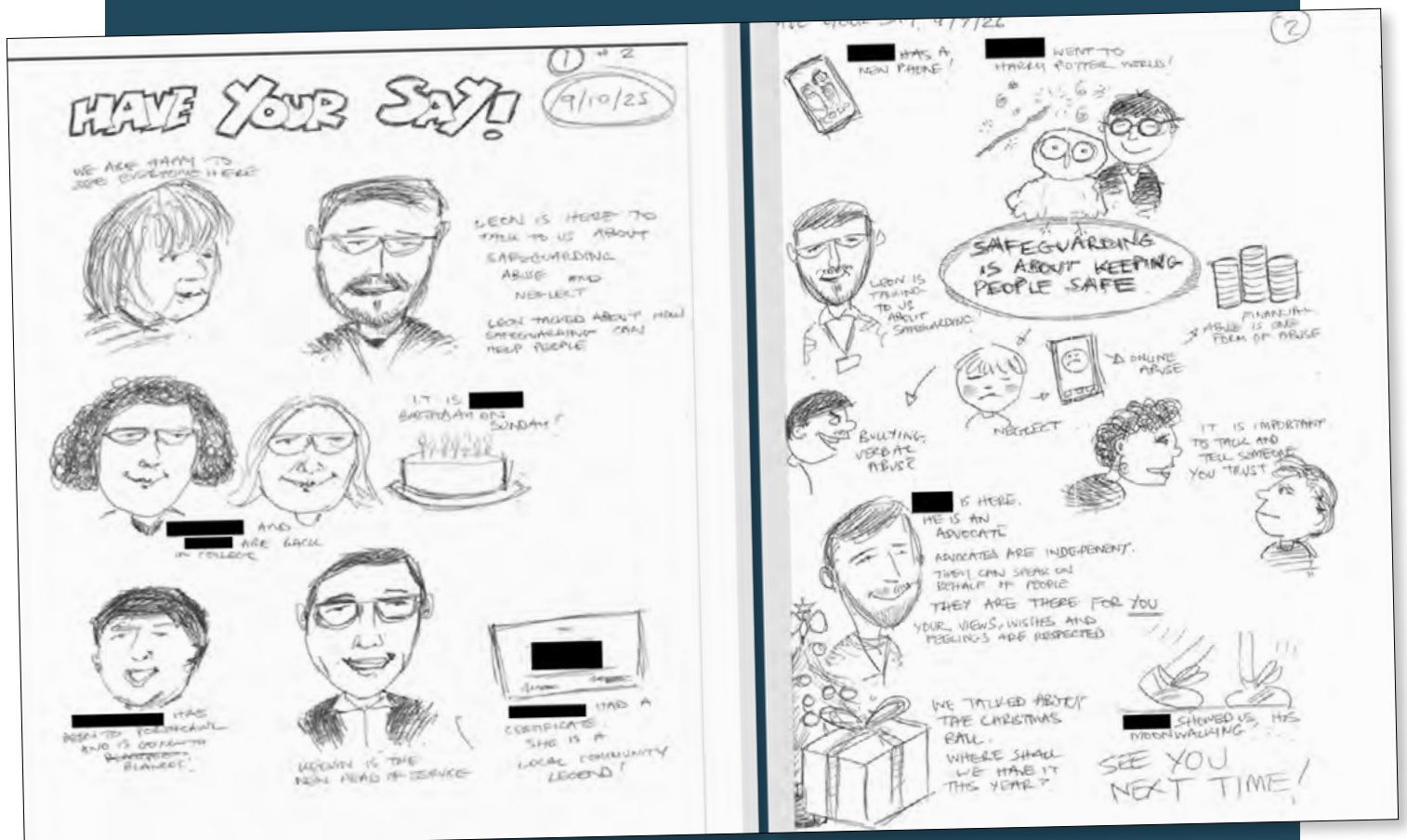
A safeguarding focus group was established to improve understanding of adult safeguarding among adults with learning disabilities and to explore their experiences of the safeguarding process.

Accessible workshops were delivered using easy read materials, bringing together members of the Having a Say and People First groups to promote engagement, learning, and discussion.

The sessions increased participants' understanding of safeguarding, including

recognising abuse, reporting concerns, and understanding what happens during a safeguarding enquiry.

Here are examples from the minutes of two separate Having Your Say meetings that highlight the people's engagement.



# Wellbeing, Choice and Independence

While safeguarding is an important part of wellbeing, wellbeing is about more than keeping people safe from abuse, neglect or harm. It also means supporting people to stay as healthy, independent and connected as possible, make their own choices, and achieve the things that are important to them.

This report outlines a number of key examples that reflect these wider aspects of wellbeing, including promoting health, independence, choice and positive outcomes. The following case studies from Children's and Family Services and Adult Social Care provide further examples of how wellbeing is actively supported in practice.

## CASE STUDY:

### SUPPORTING FAMILY WELLBEING AND BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

A family with three children were supported by Early Help following involvement from statutory services due to concerns relating to domestic abuse, escalating conflict within the home and difficulties managing the behaviour of one of the children. The family reported feeling overwhelmed and described relationships within the home as increasingly strained, with communication having broken down between family members.

An Early Help Family Support Worker completed a Signs of Safety assessment with the family, focusing on understanding what mattered most to them and identifying existing strengths and support networks. The intervention centred around improving routines and boundaries within the home, supporting positive communication, and helping parents develop confidence in managing challenging behaviour. The family were also linked into community based domestic abuse support and parenting interventions.

Work was delivered in a flexible and relationship based way, with regular home visits and practical support tailored around the family's needs. Over time, the family began to engage more consistently, conflict within the home reduced, school attendance improved and parents reported feeling more confident in managing situations independently.

At the end of the intervention, the family reported that they felt listened to and supported without feeling judged. They stated that having one consistent worker helped them remain focused during a difficult period and prevented issues from escalating further.

## CASE STUDY:

### INCREASED INDEPENDENCE & SERVICE REDUCTION

Adult D, aged 52, experienced a stroke which had a significant impact on their independence. They initially required support from three staff members, four times a day, to meet their care needs.

Their condition was also affecting their ability to continue with their university course. Through support from the Integrated Network Team, Adult D received input from Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Dietetics and Social Work services.

Changes were made to their equipment, and therapy staff worked closely with Adult D to reduce the level of support needed. A new care package was then developed, enabling them to return to their university studies.

The changes not only increased Adult D's independence and supported them to do what mattered to them but also reduced their care and support by 728 hours a year.

# Wellbeing: 2026-27 Key Priorities

## ACROSS SOCIAL SERVICES

Deliver the directorate's digital strategy by enhancing case management system readiness and implementing innovative technologies, including technology enabled care (TEC) Magic Notes, Copilot and quality assurance tools.

Make it easier for people to find information, advice and support when they need it.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Fully embed the regional exploitation strategy fully ensuring young people are protected from harm.

Improve how the voice of children is reflected within their assessments and care plans.

Encourage children's participation in meetings that are about and affect them so their voice is central in decision-making about them.

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Embed safeguarding learning from Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSRs).

Use performance, quality and customer feedback information to drive continuous improvement.

# 4

## OTHER INFORMATION

# Inspections and Reviews

Care Inspectorate Wales undertakes inspections and improvement activity to provide assurance that services are safe, effective and promote positive outcomes for people who use them. Inspection findings are used to support learning and continuous improvement across the Directorate.

## Children and Family Services

In June 2025, CIW undertook [an assurance check](#) of the local authority and fostering services. The findings from the inspection highlighted “significant improvements” across the service. This included the recognition of the improved workforce position with less reliance on agency staff, our “Grow Our Own” model supporting increased permanent recruitment, our international social work recruitment programme. Improvements were noted in relation to Senior Management and Management oversight and improved morale within the workforce with 86% of staff reporting that they would recommend working in Bridgend to others.

Significant improvements were also noted within Fostering Services with all previous areas of concerns resolved and a small number of recommendations related to training and reviews of carers as areas for improvement.

CIW made a series of recommendations which are being taken forward and will be a part of a new 3-year strategic plan that will commence in September 2026.

During 2025, CIW also undertook inspections across the Council’s regulated children’s residential services. Overall, inspections identified good quality care and recognised the progress made since the previous inspection cycle.

Three services, Hillsboro, Harwood House and Sunny Bank (August 2025), achieved ‘Good’ rating across all inspection themes. Inspectors highlighted children’s voices being heard, the use of advocacy and child-friendly information, trauma-informed and personalised support, increasingly stable staff teams and strong leadership and management arrangements. Children were supported to maintain positive relationships, engage in education and develop independence skills.

Following presentation of the inspection findings to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting, further inspections were completed at Hillsboro and Bakers Way. These inspections were positive, with no Areas for Improvement identified.

# Adult Social Care

During 2025–26, inspections of the Council's in-house residential services demonstrated positive outcomes and reflected the commitment of staff and managers to delivering high-quality, person-centred care.



**Bryn y Cae Residential Home** achieved an 'Excellent' rating for Wellbeing and 'Good' ratings across Care and Support, Environment and Leadership and Management. Inspectors recognised the warm and welcoming environment, meaningful activities and community links, positive relationships between residents and staff and effective governance arrangements.

In recognition of the commitment and dedication of staff, colleagues from Bryn y Cae Residential Home attended the Buckingham Palace Garden Party during 2025. This prestigious invitation provided an opportunity to celebrate the contribution made by the team and

reflected the positive culture and high standards of care delivered across Bridgend's residential services.

**Ty Cwm Ogwr Residential Home** achieved 'Good' ratings across all four domains. Inspectors highlighted the kindness and compassion demonstrated by staff, effective safeguarding arrangements, safe medication management and a clean, welcoming environment. Despite a period of staffing challenges, inspectors recognised the impact of leadership and positive culture within the home.

**Ty Ynysawdre** and **Ty Llwynderw** both achieved 'Good' ratings across all four domains. Inspectors highlighted positive wellbeing outcomes, person-centred care, effective safeguarding and medication management arrangements, welcoming environments and strong leadership and management. Staff teams were recognised for promoting dignity, choice and independence, with robust quality assurance arrangements supporting continuous improvement. No Areas for Improvement or Priority Action Notices were issued following either inspection.

No Areas for Improvement or Priority Action Notices were issued following the inspections of adult residential services undertaken during 2025–26.



## HMP Parc

HM Inspectorate of Prison's independent review report of HMP Parc in January 2026 highlighted:

*"Social Care provision was **effective** and **well managed**."*

&

*"A well-resourced social care team was based in the prison, which created **good visibility** and **accessibility**."*

Alongside this, the team were recognised with a partnership award for providing unwavering support to individuals with complex health conditions, as well as those who are requiring end of life care:

*"The team go unnoticed in such a large establishment and feel they should have the recognition they deserve for being such a fantastic team".*

## Learning and Improvement

Inspection findings across Children and Family Services and Adult Social Care demonstrate the commitment of staff and managers to providing safe, compassionate and person centred services.

Learning from inspections is embedded within service improvement plans and monitored through established governance and quality assurance arrangements, including the Directorate's Regulatory Tracker, quarterly corporate performance arrangements and annual self-assessment processes. This ensures that areas identified through regulatory activity continue to inform practice, strengthen services and support positive outcomes for children, young people, adults and carers.



# Complaints and Representations

Complaints about social services are dealt with under the [Social Services Complaints Procedure \(Wales\) Regulations 2014](#) and the Welsh Government's guidance, "[A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services](#)." These frameworks give people a way to raise concerns about the services they receive and help ensure complaints are handled fairly and as quickly as possible.

Over the last year, the number of complaints we received increased slightly by 3%. The most common concerns raised were about communication, staff behaviour, and decisions relating to case management and reviews. Together, these accounted for 38% of all complaints received.

We always aim to provide a good local resolution for the people, families and carers who use our services. This approach was successful in 98% of cases, with complaints being resolved either informally or at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints process.

The remaining 2% of complaints were investigated via the stage two (formal) statutory procedure. At this stage, an independent investigator reviews the complaint and produces a report of their findings. The report may include recommendations to help us improve the services we provide.

We regularly review complaints to identify what we are doing well and where we can improve. We also make sure that any recommendations and lessons learned from Stage 2 complaints are put into practice. In response to stage 2 complaints received during the year, here is a summary of learning outcomes implemented:

| SERVICE AREA      | LEARNING OUTCOME                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adult Social Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted service improvements in Adult Social Care included identifying the need to strengthen understanding of the duty to proactively offer carers' assessments, improve clear and accessible communication, and ensure consistent identification of eligible carers.</li> <li>In response, the service has delivered staff workshops, established a dedicated Carers Assessment Social Worker role, introduced enhanced auditing and monitoring, and embedded actions within the Carers Steering Group and training programme.</li> <li>This has resulted in improved staff awareness, governance, and consistency, with a stronger emphasis on proactive, person-centred support and improved experience for carers and those seeking help.</li> </ul> |

| SERVICE AREA                                             | LEARNING OUTCOME                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Children and Family Services / Education Engagement Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complaint investigation findings highlighted the need to strengthen governance, confidentiality, and consistency in handling referrals involving staff, alongside improving clarity for schools on safeguarding processes and thresholds.</li><li>In response, the service is developing a joint protocol for managing referrals, reinforcing a strict 'need to know' approach, and enhancing partnership working with schools through training, audits, and ongoing engagement to improve understanding of referral processes and safeguarding thresholds.</li><li>Improvements also include a focus on robust and accurate record-keeping, supporting accountability and transparency. Collectively, these actions strengthen safeguarding practice, information governance, and consistency of decision-making, leading to improved confidence in how concerns are managed.</li></ul> |

## The Citizen Voice Body

The Citizen Voice Body, known as [Llais](#) is an independent organisation that helps people have their say about health and social care services in Wales. It works to make sure that people's views are heard and considered when services are planned, delivered, and improved.

Llais, which is the Welsh word for Voice, also provides free advocacy support and advice to help people raise concerns or make complaints about health and social care services.

During 2025–26, we received one complaint about Adult Social Care that was raised with the support of a Llais advocate.

You can find more information about complaints and feedback in Bridgend in the Social Services Complaints and Feedback Annual Report.

# Other Sources of Information

## BRIDGEND COUNCIL

Delivering Together Our Corporate Plan 2023-28

Council Constitution

Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate

Bridgend Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Corporate Self-Assessment

Audit Wales Reports

## KEY PARTNERS / ADVOCACY SUPPORT

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board

Awen Cultural Trust

Halo Leisure

BAVO Bridgend

People First Bridgend

Care Inspectorate Wales

Social Care Wales

TuVida Bridgend: Carer's Wellbeing Service

Bridgend Carers Centre

Llais Wales

## KEY LEGISLATION / GUIDANCE

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

More than just words: Welsh language plan in health and social care

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014

A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services

Welsh Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2035

Health and Social Care (Wales) Act (2025)

# 5

## Glossary

**Active Offer** This is the Welsh Government commitment to provide health and social care services in Welsh without people having to ask for them. Welsh language services should be offered as a standard part of care.

**Advocacy** Advocates in social care are independent from the local authority (local council) and the NHS. They are trained to help people understand their rights, express their views and wish.

**Assessment** A meeting / discussion to help us to determine how someone is coping and what care and support they may need.

**Assistive Technology** Equipment or technology that helps people in Wales live more independently and carry out everyday activities.

**Care Experienced Children** Care experienced is an umbrella term which can mean children / young people who are:

- Looked after at home through a Care Order
- Looked after away from home in a residential children's house, in a foster placement or in a kinship placement (Looked After or Non-Looked After)
- Previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences.

The child / young person may never have been formally looked after.

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)** CIW is the social care provider regulator. They will register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the wellbeing of the people of Wales.

**Care Leavers** In Wales, care leavers are individuals who have been in the care of the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care on or after

their 16th birthday. The support provided to care leavers is intended to be equivalent to what a child who has not been looked after might reasonably expect from their parents.

### **Care and Support Plan**

A care and support plan is a document that sets out what has been discussed during a social care needs assessment and what is going to happen as a result. It is a plan which a local authority is required to prepare and maintain under section 54 (1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

**Direct Payments** Direct payments are issued to individuals to allow them to pay for their own care. They are a way that local authorities can help to meet individual's eligible need for care and support, or a carer's need for support. They are a way for people to arrange their own care and support.

**Extra Care** The provision of a domiciliary care package to an individual living in supported living/ accommodation.

### **Information Advice and Assistance (IAA)**

Refer to contacts and referrals – consent and level of information recorded – link to proportionate assessment.

### **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**

An IRO is someone who makes sure that care experienced children are looked after properly and that their care and support plans are right for them.

### **Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

Legal framework used protect the public. It brings together different organisations, such as the police, probation and prison services, to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders.

### **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

A regular confidential meeting where different organisations work together to share information and create safety plans for people who are at high risk of serious harm from domestic abuse.

### **Mwy Na Geiriau / More than Just Words**

More than just words is a strategy and delivery plan to aim to improve the quality of care for individuals living in a bilingual country.

### **Operating Without Registration (OWR)**

When a care provider is delivering a service that legally requires registration with the relevant regulator but is doing so without being registered.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention**

Prevention and early intervention are forms of support aimed at improving outcomes for people or preventing escalating need or risk. They are also sometimes referred to as early help or preventative services.

### **Police Protection Notice (PPN)**

A form completed by the police when there are concerns about someone's safety or wellbeing, so that appropriate support or safeguarding action can be considered.

### **Reablement / Rehabilitation / Interim care**

This short-term care is sometimes called intermediate care, or aftercare. Reablement is a type of care that helps people relearn how to do daily activities, like cooking meals and washing. It is provided by local authorities with the aim of mitigating the need for long term care and support.

**Resident / Citizen** A person whose usual residence is within the local authority boundary.

**Reunification** Reunification refers to when a care experienced child or young person safely returns home to their family. Reunification only takes place once it has been determined that it is safe and the best outcome for the child or young person.

### **Residential Care Home / Nursing Home**

A residential care home provides accommodation and 24-hour personal care and support to the older people and others who may find it difficult to manage daily life at home. Both a residential care home and nursing home provide care and support 24 hours a day, however the main difference is that a nursing home is able to provide a higher level of care. Nursing homes have qualified nurses on-site around the clock to provide medical care as needed whereas residential homes help people with personal care and support them to engage in physical activity.

### **Safeguarding \ Adult Protection \ Child Protection**

Safeguarding sometimes referred to as adult protection or child protection is about protecting children and adults from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers.

**Secure Estate** A secure estate is a facility where individuals (adults or children and young people) may be housed or detained due to legal restrictions. Examples of a secure estate include prisons, young detention accommodation or an approved premises. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales)

Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to assess and meet the care and support needs of individuals within a secure estate.

**Section 33 Agreement** A formal arrangement in Wales allowing the NHS and local councils to work together by sharing budgets, resources, and responsibilities for delivering care services.

### **Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR)**

A multi-agency review of a serious safeguarding incident to understand what happened, identify learning, improve safeguarding practice, and help prevent similar incidents in the future.

### **Social Care Wales (SCW)**

SCW is the workforce regulator. As part of this they register and set standards for the care and support workforce and develop the workforce. SCW also has an improvement remit, by which they will share good practice, set priorities for research and provide information for the public and other organisations.

### **Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014**

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is a law that aims to improve the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and to transform social services in Wales.

### **Supported Living / Accommodation**

Supported living accommodation is a type of housing that provides personal care, support or supervision to help people live independently. The care and support are separate from the housing contract. The accommodation can be shared or single, depending on the needs and preferences of the occupants.

**Third Sector** The third sector refers to charities, community groups and not-for-profit organisations that help people and improve communities.

**Transition** The period of changeover/ move in being supported by Children and Family Services to being supported by Adult Social Care.

**Unpaid Carer** An unpaid carer is someone who provides care and support to family members, friends, or neighbours who are affected by disability, physical or mental ill-health, frailty, or substance misuse. The carer does not need to be living with the person they care for.

**Young Carer** A young carer is an unpaid carer who is up to the age of 18. They may be providing care and support to parents, siblings or other family members.

