

Meeting of:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	23 SEPTEMBER 2026
Report Title:	SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025 -26
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	DEBBIE MORGAN GROUP MANAGER, BUSINESS STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE & IMPROVEMENT
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The Social Services Annual Report 2025-26 is a statutory requirement providing the Council, the people of Bridgend County Borough, regulators and partners with an overview of the effectiveness of the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate during the past year. The report reflects on 2025-26, highlighting achievements and challenges whilst outlining priorities for 2026-27. This is the second report prepared under the revised Welsh Government guidance, with performance assessed across the four themes of People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration, and Well-being. As well as the performance assessment section of the report, it includes a Director's Summary, information on leadership, workforce, resources, inspections and reviews, and complaints and representations. The report is informed by feedback from people who use services, helping to ensure that performance is evaluated through the experiences of those who access and deliver services. The report highlights key achievements during 2025-26, including workforce stability, positive service performance, strengthened early intervention and preventative support, increased local placement capacity for children, further development of community-based support for adults, and

	continued improvements in safeguarding arrangements. It also identifies key risks and financial pressures, including increasing demand and complexity of need, workforce sustainability, placement sufficiency, and the long-term financial sustainability of social care services.
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to present the Social Services Annual Report 2025-26 (**Appendix 1**) to Council for approval.

2. Background

- 2.1** Following the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) (SSWBA), Welsh Government developed a performance framework to ensure local authorities report on and evaluate performance against the well-being outcomes of the Act. The Act seeks to do this by:

- transforming the way in which social services are delivered, primarily through promoting people's independence and giving them a strong voice and control;
- promoting partnership working; and
- enhancing the preventative role of social care and health, setting out overarching well-being duties to reduce or delay the need for care and support.

- 2.2** In May 2024, Welsh Government and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS Cymru) issued revised guidance for Social Services Annual Reports, <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-05/local-authority-social-services-annual-report-directors-report-guidance.pdf> reflecting developments in social care since 2017, including the Performance and Improvement Framework and stakeholder feedback.

- 2.3** The 2025-26 Annual Report is the second report prepared under the revised guidance. It supports the Director of Social Services in meeting their statutory duty to report annually to Council on the effectiveness of social services within the local authority area and has been developed in accordance with the Performance and Improvement Framework.

- 2.4** The draft Annual Report was presented to the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th September 2026. The Committee welcomed the report and recommended the Governance and Accountability section (page 11) provide greater clarity on the roles and processes of both the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was also recommended that reference be made to the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Working Groups and their contribution to the scrutiny process. These recommendations have been incorporated, and the report has been updated accordingly.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 As outlined in the annual report guidance the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places a duty on local authorities to promote the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, through a person centered and preventative approach to service delivery.
- 3.2 The report guidance sets the structure and content of the report, including a Director's Summary, a performance assessment against the four themes, and information relating to leadership, workforce, resources, inspections, complaints, and priorities for improvement.
- 3.3 This report forms an integral part of the Performance and Improvement Framework evaluating performance against eight quality standards, organised under four key themes: People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration, and Well-being (table one).

Table One

Theme	Quality Standards
People	1. All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them. 2. Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision.
Prevention	3. 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. 4. 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.
Partnership and Integration	5. Effective partnerships are in place to commission and fully deliver fully integrated, high-quality sustainable outcomes for people. 6. People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners.
Well-being	7. People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm. 8. People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible.

3.4 Performance against each standard is considered within the Performance Assessment section of the report. The standards provide the framework for Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to assess the quality and effectiveness of local authority social services. For each standard, the report outlines progress and achievements during 2025-26, identifies areas for further improvement, and sets out priorities for 2026-27.

3.5 The Director's Summary provides an overview of the Directorate's key achievements, risks and challenges, as well as overarching priorities and objectives for the year ahead.

3.5.1 Summary of Key Achievements in 2025-26:

- Improved workforce stability through a reduction in agency staffing and growth in permanent recruitment.
- Sustained strong service performance and positive regulatory outcomes across social care services.
- Strengthened early intervention and preventative support, contributing to a reduction in statutory interventions for children and families.
- Enhanced support for care experienced children and foster carers.
- Further developed preventative, integrated and community based support for adults.
- Strengthened safeguarding arrangements through continued development of integrated and multi-agency approaches, including excellent joint working with HMP Parc.
- Progressed service transformation, quality assurance and partnership working to support continuous improvement.

3.5.2 Summary of Key Risks:

- Sustaining workforce wellbeing, recruitment and retention.
- Rising demand and complexity across social care services continues to present challenges to the timely and effective delivery of safeguarding services.
- Sufficiency and stability of local care placements for children and young people.
- Increasing demand, particularly within Adult Social Care, without additional resources.
- Long-term financial sustainability in the context of growing demand and service pressures.

3.5.3 Summary of Overarching Priorities for 2026-27:

- Maintain a stable, skilled and supported workforce.
- Strengthen prevention and early intervention across all service areas.
- Increase local placement capacity and improve outcomes for care experienced children.
- Respond sustainably to increasing adult social care demand.

- Continue to embed safeguarding learning, strengthening protection for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Deliver digital transformation and improve service efficiency and effectiveness.
- Ensure financial sustainability through transformation, commissioning and partnership working.

3.6 The Annual Report is also informed by feedback from people who use our services. This helps ensure that the experiences and views of those directly involved in social care and well-being services are reflected in the assessment of performance and the identification of areas for improvement.

3.7 It is important to note that the report also recognises the collective corporate contribution of the Council, partner organisations and the wider social services and well-being system in supporting vulnerable children, adults, carers and families across the county borough. The report acknowledges the vital role of statutory, health, third sector, community, cultural and leisure partners, and pays tribute to the dedication, professionalism, and compassion of the workforce across both preventative and statutory services.

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

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

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

5.1 The delivery of social care and well-being services under the SSWBA supports the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Through promoting independence, wellbeing and inclusion, and by supporting children, young people, adults, carers and families to achieve their personal outcomes, these services help create a healthier and more equal Bridgend.

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

- **Long Term:** Social Care and Wellbeing Services continue to operate within a context of increasing demand and complexity. The report highlights the importance of strengthening preventative approaches that build resilience, promote independence and support sustainable services. Through investment in early help and family support, more children are supported to remain safely within their families and communities, helping to reduce the need for statutory

intervention. Similarly, the Council's reablement service helps adults regain confidence and independence following illness or hospital admission, reducing reliance on ongoing care and support, supporting long-term wellbeing.

- **Prevention:** The report highlights service developments that support the preventative approach promoted by the SSWBA and reflected in the revised performance framework. Preventative services continue to support people to access help at an earlier stage within their own communities, promoting independence, strengthening community connections and building resilience. Through Community Navigators and Local Community Co-ordinators, individuals and families are supported to make the most of their strengths, local networks and community resources, helping to prevent or delay the need for more formal care and support.
- **Integration:** Effective partnership working is central to delivering seamless, person centred services and improving outcomes for people. The Partnership and Integration section of the report highlights how we work with partners including Awen Cultural Trust and Halo Leisure Trust to promote well-being and support people to remain active, connected and independent within their communities. We also work with Tros Gynnal Plant, who support the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, and People First Bridgend to ensure that the views of children, young people and adults with learning disabilities inform service development and delivery.
- **Collaboration:** The report highlights the importance of collaboration in the planning and delivery of social care and well-being services. Through established partnership arrangements, including the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board and Regional Safeguarding Board, the Council works with partners to maximise resources, share expertise and improve outcomes. During 2025-26, this collaborative approach supported the implementation of the Regional Threshold and Eligibility Support Guidance, promoting a shared understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, supporting consistent decision making and strengthening multi-agency approaches to protect vulnerable children and young people.
- **Involvement:** The people who use our services are our key stakeholders, and it is essential their views and experiences inform service delivery and improvement. The People section of the report highlights how the directorate supports voice, choice and control through engagement, co-production and feedback mechanisms. This includes work with Bridgend Carers Centre to improve support for carers of people living with dementia, using carers' experiences and feedback to shape support networks, activities and services to ensure support is responsive to their needs.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no climate change and nature implications arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 How we support and continue to improve and strengthen our safeguarding arrangements is a key theme throughout the report.
- 7.2 Key safeguarding actions are noted within the Well-being section and include:
- strengthened corporate safeguarding arrangements through improved oversight, self-assessment and workforce awareness.
 - embedding learning from Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews (SUSRs) to strengthen safeguarding practice, workforce awareness and regional training.
 - implementation of the Regional Exploitation Strategy to strengthen multi-agency responses to child exploitation.
 - enhanced multi-agency working with HMP Parc which has succeeded in reducing harm in the secure estate,
 - establishment of a Learning Disability Safeguarding Group to increase safeguarding awareness and inform safeguarding practice through lived experience.
- 7.3 The Directorate's safeguarding priorities for 2026-27 include:
- fully embedding the Regional Exploitation Strategy to strengthen protection and support for children and young people at risk of harm.
 - continuing to embed learning from SUSRs to strengthen safeguarding practice.
 - and, using performance, quality assurance and customer feedback to drive continuous improvement in safeguarding and service delivery

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the sustainability of social care, wellbeing and prevention services continues to present significant challenges for the Council. Part 8 of the SSWBA requires the Head of Paid Service and the Director of Social Services to ensure Elected Members receive clear advice on the resources required to effectively deliver social services functions.
- 8.2 Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services reported an underspend of £1.736 million against a net budget of £113.134 million in 2025-26. However, this position was largely achieved through the maximisation of grant funding, including the Children and Communities Grant, Housing Support Grant and Pathways of Care Grant. Without this additional funding, the Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services budgets would have reported an overspend of £137,000.
- 8.3 The Directorate remains reliant on external grant funding to support service delivery, presenting an ongoing financial risk should funding levels reduce or cease in future years. Driven by increasing demand, higher levels of need and the complexity of care required, the report highlights continued financial pressures across social care services, particularly in:
- children's residential placements.

- learning disability and mental health services.
- physical disability and sensory impairment services.
- older people's services.

- 8.4 To support the Directorate in managing these ongoing pressures, Council approved £6.6 million of budget growth for 2026-27 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2029-30, including funding for commissioned care contracts, children's residential placements, learning disability transitions, adult social care pressures and supported accommodation services.
- 8.5 The Social Services Improvement Board continues to oversee actions to address service and financial pressures, including the acceleration of transformation activity within Adult Social Care.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Council approves the 2025-26 Social Services Annual Report.

Background documents

None