

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JUNE 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - OVERVIEW

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update committee on the context, focus and structure of Children's Social Care (previously safeguarding and assessment), the achievements and priorities/areas for development for the forthcoming year.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The report links to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:
- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
 - Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate aims to provide a range of support and services that are responsive and proportionate to need whilst also ensuring that children, young people and adults are safeguarded and protected from harm. In 2011 the Welsh Assembly Government published 'Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action'. This paper set out how the Welsh Assembly Government intended to take social services and social care forward. Sustainable Social Services was then quickly followed by Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill and then the Act in 2014. The Bill and Act drew on the principles of Sustainable Social Services. The Act was implemented on 6th April 2016 and focuses on the reform of social services law, to make provision to improve the well-being outcomes for 1) people who need care and support and 2) carers who need support. The Act emphasises the need for cooperation and partnership of public authorities with a view to improving the well-being of people.
- 3.2 The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) monitor local authority services and performance against the guidance and regulations that underpin the Act. It also monitors key performance measures through routine reporting, national themed inspections and service inspections.
- 3.3 The vision in Bridgend is to actively promote independence, wellbeing and choice that will support individuals and families in achieving their full potential. The Directorate is responsible for the planning, commissioning, assessment and, where appropriate, the direct provision of Social Services. The key priorities for the directorate during 2015-16 have been to:
- i. progress the objectives of the directorate business plan;

- ii. contribute to the new corporate priorities for 2016-17;
- iii. contribute to the medium term financial strategy (MTFS);
- iv. implement the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014;
- v. implement the new all Wales Community Care Information System (WCCIS) which is a system which will enable health and social care practitioners to work together in a more integrated way to support people. Bridgend is the first local authority in Wales to do so.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 Childrens Social Care comprises of 6 assessment and care management teams (county wide front door/assessment team, 3 locality safeguarding hubs, disabled children's team and Just ask (leaving care)), Bridgend Foster care, 3 Residential Units (Bakers Way, Sunnybank and Newbridge House) and the Independent Reviewing Service. We also have an adoption service that is delivered on a regional basis (Western Bay Adoption Service). The Head of Service is supported by a team of 4 group managers who all have portfolios which include line management responsibilities in addition to being strategic/operational leads for particular aspects of service delivery.
- 4.2 The assessment team is based in Bridgend Civic Centre and receives contacts and referrals from members of the public and professionals in respect of safeguarding and child welfare matters. In 2015/16, the Assessment team continued to experience an 8% rise in contacts (4988 compared to 4619 the previous year). The proportion of those that progressed to referral increased from 22% to 26 % resulting in an overall increase of referrals by 28%. It has been positive to note however that despite these overall increases the rate of re referrals has come down from 20.4% to 16.5%. The Assessment team has also exceeded targets with the percentage of referrals during the year on which a decision was made within 1 working day staying at 100%.
- 4.3 As part of the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 , work has been undertaken with the Assessment team to agree a model for the Information, Advice and Assistance Service. This work has involved practitioners and managers in addition to consultation with the Early Help Service and other agencies, who will in time become stakeholders within Bridgend's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- 4.4 In addition to receiving and screening referrals the team undertakes proportionate assessments, child protection activity (strategy discussions/meetings and child protection enquiries), court work and accommodate children when this is the only safe option available to them.
- 4.5 Two of the safeguarding hubs (North and West) are now located in the communities making them more accessible to the public. They provide services to children, young people and families and the professionals involved in case management and service delivery. The East hub and Just ask are based in Bridgend Civic Centre. The Disabled Childrens team is based in Bridgend Resource Centre alongside the adult's community support team. These teams carry out the same functions as the assessment team in relation to children and young people already allocated to a social worker in addition to coordinating/providing services under the auspices of a care and support plan or Pathway Plan (care leavers). Over the last year, the

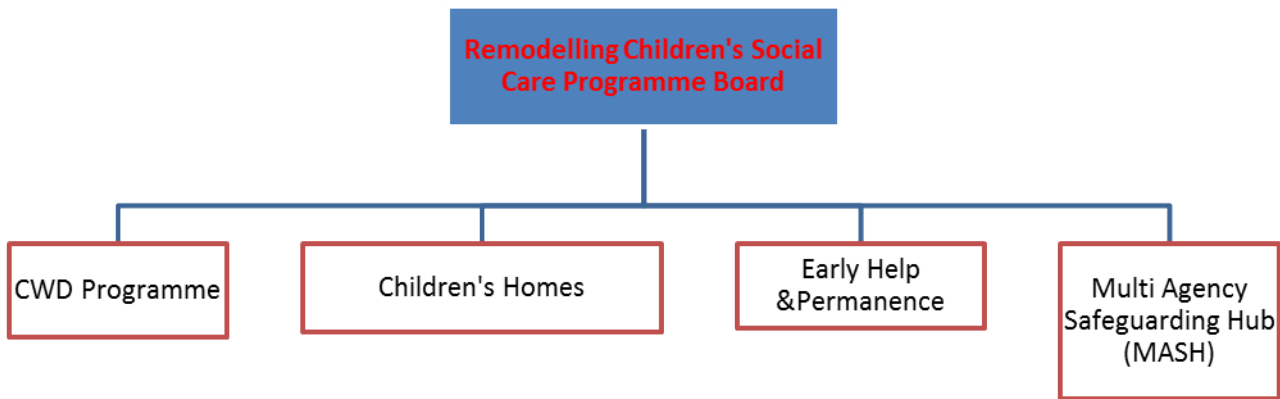
interface with colleagues/practitioners in early help has been strengthened with teams being collocated according to locality.

- 4.6 In 2015/2016, the teams worked with over 2000 children and young people. On 31st March, 176 of these were children whose names were on the child protection register and 380 were looked after. The reduction in numbers of children looked after by the Local Authority is showing a steady decrease although it is recognized that the overall percentage is less than the previous year. Admissions are robustly overseen by Group Managers. The number of discharge of care orders (so that children cease to be LAC when it is deemed safe enough to do so) is being monitored by a dedicated Principal Officer who works alongside the case management teams to identify children and young people for whom alternative arrangements can be considered and progressed. The Child In Need rates that were observed by the Institute of Public Care reviewers in April 2015 also remain relatively high compared with other similar authorities. Some of these children are unlikely to be receiving very active family support packages and arguably might be better served by targeted early help services.
- 4.7 Children's residential accommodation consists of three units those being Bakers Way: disabled children's respite service, Newbridge House: transition unit for 16/17 year olds and Sunnybank: Complex needs unit for 11-15 year olds. Over the last year Newbridge House have had eight admissions and eight discharges and Sunnybank six admissions and six discharges. Bridgend Foster Care assess, recruit and support a wide range of carers including general foster carers, relatives, Regulation 38 (Fostering Regulations Wales (2003)), Family Link, Supported Lodgings and When I'm Ready Carers. They also have a small team who coordinate placements and commissioning. This area of service continues to experience challenges in relation to the lack of placement choice locally in house and with Independent providers. Despite this the teams are committed to matching children with the most appropriate carers with the overarching aim of achieving stability and reducing disruptions. Bridgend Foster care has also further developed their recruitment campaign in conjunction with the marketing team. The service follows robust assessment processes and is required by fostering regulations to undertake a range of references/checks in addition to comprehensive interviews with the applicants themselves which normally take at least 20 hours. Applicants must also attend a bespoke three day training 'skills to foster' course.
- 4.8 Recruitment and retention of staff continues to be a priority for the service. The new staffing structure included the creation of three hubs and the introduction of a new role of deputy team manager, aimed at creating more resilience within the three safeguarding teams and increasing the management capacity to ensure a more robust support and supervision structure. The cohort of Group managers, team managers and deputy team managers is stable.
- 4.9 Whilst the number of leavers is higher than desirable, this does represent an improvement compared with the previous two years as in Table 1 below:

	Leavers	Starters
2013/14	28	23
2014/15	24	17
2015/16	15	14

- 4.9.1 This improved level of retention is evidenced by the number of newly qualified social worker who have completed their “first year in practice training” and those who are progressing to Social Worker 2 (i.e. with 2 years PQ experience) during this year.
- 4.10 Following a recent recruitment campaign, all Social Worker vacancies are now filled however, whilst waiting for new starters to join Bridgend the service has ensured that all vacancies are covered either by temporary or agency staff. Attention has also been given to the increased level of supervision required. We continue to experience difficulties in recruiting to Senior Practitioner posts and currently have three vacancies at this level. Whilst we continue to advertise externally, we are also considering filling these positions through workforce planning/grow your own approach.
- 4.11 The service continues to work closely with colleagues in workforce development to ensure that the best level of support and training possible is offered to new and existing staff. Newly qualified social workers entering their first year of practice are supported through a first year in practice framework which is based on the Care Council for Wales and Welsh Government Guidance 2008. The national guidance is currently under review by the Care Council for Wales and is likely to be replaced by a model which spans the first three years in practice. Bridgend’s current guidance sets out the key features of a framework to support newly qualified social workers during their first year in practice. It recognises that newly qualified social workers require high quality support to make the successful transition from social work graduate to competent practitioner. The model has been designed to assist newly qualified social workers develop their skills, knowledge and capability, and strengthen their professional confidence. It provides them with access to regular and focused support during their first year of employment in social work.
- 4.12 20 newly qualified social workers have undertaken their first year in practice within the Authority over the past year, 16 of whom were based within Children’s Social Care. They have been supported via a group based mentoring programme facilitated by Consultant Social Workers and Senior Practitioners. In addition newly qualified social workers have access to a structured induction and a programme of core training workshops
- 4.13 Social workers in the second year of practice are supported to undertake a Care Council for Wales approved Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) Consolidation Programme. Bridgend is part of Consortium Y De, a partnership between the University of South Wales, Cardiff Metropolitan University and ten local authorities in the South East Wales region for delivery of the Consolidation Programme. 17 social workers registered for the Consolidation Programme over four cohorts which ran through from September 2015 to March 2016. Integral to the Programme are four in-house workshops covering safeguarding children, safeguarding adults at risk, domestic violence and substance misuse. The Consolidation Programme will become a mandatory requirement for all social workers qualifying from 2016 social work programmes onwards, and a pre-requisite for renewal of registration as a social worker.
- 4.14 All staff from across Children’s Social Care also have access a range of learning and development opportunities provided via the Social Care Workforce Development Team, these includes e-learning, short courses and accredited programmes of study.

- 4.15 Leading and managing practice is a programme of training to support senior practitioners, deputy team managers and managers to develop their skills and knowledge. Workshops cover areas such as leading and managing performance, coaching and mentoring and business strategy. They are also able to access post qualifying training such the Post Graduate Diploma in Managing Practice Quality in Social Care and other accredited awards management qualifications such as Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) leadership and management awards at level 3, 5 & 7.
- 4.16 In response to the new corporate priorities, the Directorate has now completed the 2016/17 Business Plan and this reflects the requirements set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, the need to continue to transform approaches to ensure sustainable support and services going forward and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The priorities for the directorate going forward into 2016-17 are:
- Reduce demand by investing in targeted early help and intervention programmes;
 - Develop appropriate mechanisms to enable the Council to provide good information, advice and assistance to the public;
 - Involve service users, carers and communities in developing and commissioning services;
 - Develop a multi- agency safeguarding hub to provide effective multi agency responses to safeguarding issues;
 - Review and consider new models of service delivery for respite and residential care and to ensure a flexible support and service to people when they need it;
 - Develop an appropriate service model for children in transition from childhood to adulthood including children with disabilities and children leaving care;
 - Ensure appropriate services are available to children at risk from child sexual exploitation;
 - Work with partners and schools to support carers by providing the right information, advice and assistance where relevant;
 - Enable community groups and the Third Sector to have more voice and control over community assets;
 - Implement the planned budget reductions identified in the 2016-17 budget;
 - Develop the culture and skills required to meet the changing agenda.
- 4.17 Childrens Social Care have established a Remodelling Board which will oversee the planning of new models of service delivery into implementation phase. The 4 projects that will report to this Board are (i) Children with Disabilities Transformation (ii) Remodelling residential provision (iii) Early Help and Permanence and (iv) Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):



4.18 Each of the projects are at different stages, with the first (CWD) being the most advanced. Within this project, five distinct work areas have been identified:



4.19 In line with the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), work undertaken to date has focused on reviewing Short Breaks (respite services) and reviewing the high-cost out-of-county placements.

4.20 In July 2015, a report was presented to Cabinet, to inform them of the work being undertaken as part of the Children with Disabilities Transformation programme. Cabinet noted the progress that had been made to date, and approved a consultation exercise with staff and stakeholders, to inform the options for delivery of respite services and in-county accommodation in the future.

4.21 A full public consultation on the options appraisal and the proposed new model will take place during June and July. As part of this consultation process, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be presented with a detailed report in July 2016 – providing the options considered and the justification for proposing the recommended way forward for the Short Breaks service and the proposed new model for specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs.

4.22 Project Briefs have been developed and work has commenced for the Transition Project, Continuing Care, and Y Bont & Discovery Days. Further reports in respect of these projects will be presented to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.23 Project leads have also been identified for the other 3 projects described in paragraph 4.17 and scoping/ initiation documents are being finalised in order for the overarching Programme Board to carry out robust, systematic oversight and ensure milestones are met.

4.24 Staff in Childrens Social Care are committed to providing a child focused service that is aimed at bringing about the best possible outcomes for children and young people and strive to continuously improve the service in order to achieve this.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessments.

6.1 This is an overview report therefore an EIA is not required.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 A summary of Childrens Social Care net expenditure for the past two years is shown below:

	2014/15	2015/16
CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE	SPEND 14/15	SPEND 15/16
CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER	11,721,091	11,420,346
FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES	929,248	795,474
OTHERCHILD & FAMILY SERVICES	1,064,209	941,034
COMMISSIONING & SOCIAL WORK	4,609,191	4,559,238
ADMINISTRATION	1,229,068	1,078,197
Totals	19,552,807	18,794,289

8. Recommendation.

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee receives the report and comments on any aspects as appropriate.

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10. Background documents
 None