

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Hayden Trollope – Executive Member People & Social Services**

Report Written by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	25.8.22	16.08.22			19.9.22		29.09.22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 (Appendix 1).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The performance of the department is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March, with quarterly reports presented to the previous Social Services Committee during 2021- 22. At the end of the year a comprehensive self-evaluation of performance is undertaken to inform the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services
 - 2.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - Option 1**
Council to approve the publication of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022.
 - Option 2**
Council to consider the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate comments and or recommendations for amendment prior to approval and publication.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic support the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The Annual Report contributes and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The Director's Annual Report identifies the pressures and budgetary implications for 2021/2022.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Social Services maintain a directorate risk register which is aligned to both service level and corporate risk. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the Director of Social Services.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications with this report

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications related in this report

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Detail is provided within the Director's Annual Report 2021/2022.

The following is taken from the Directors Summary within the report.

Headline updates:

- 6.1.1 During 2021/22 Children's and Adult Services continued to maintain the majority of services whilst adhering to the continual changes to guidance from Welsh Government. Safeguarding remained a priority throughout with home visits being undertaken to children on the Child Protection Register, Children Looked After, care leavers, and those children on the 'edge of care'. Adult services continued to discharge patients from hospital (including those recovering from COVID-19) and undertake emergency assessments. However, Adult Services at the outset of the pandemic had to close our day services and respite care facility to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people. However, during 2021/22 adult services respite care has reopened all be it in a staged way to continue to manage the risks associated with the virus.
- 6.1.2 During 2021/ 22 both Augusta House and the Local Authority Community Options Service have resumed full operations although both have had to adapt their models of delivery to meet the requirements of Welsh Government guidance and the increasing needs and demands of our citizens and their families.
- 6.1.3 In April 2021 the council adopted an agile working policy. All staff were categorised according to their role as home working, agile or Service /Community Worker. Very few Social Services staff fell into the home working category as the majority of our services are front facing and a large proportion of staff are frontline care workers which are service based i.e. Adult Services Provider teams including our care workers and support workers. Staff have coped well with this transition

largely due to becoming used to working from home as a result of the pandemic. Social services staff continued to work from our main offices at Anvil Court, the VITCC, Beaufort Road, Blaina ICC as well as working from home. Much has been done to ensure this new way of working has not had a negative impact on the workforce. For example, teams still come together face to face for team meetings, newly qualified staff are required to attend the office full time to ensure the correct levels of support are in place, plus the council has developed a Well-being Wednesday bulletin providing information and links on all aspects of well-being to staff.

- 6.1.4 One of the biggest challenges faced during 2021/22 related to lack of workforce capacity. Within Adult Social Services this was across frontline registered care worker roles, both our in-house and externally commissioned care and support services. In Children's Services the pressure was in the locality teams which manage the majority of children on the child protection register, children looked after and court work. The department as a whole has been working hard to look at innovative ways of managing the workload in these areas as well as developing recruitment and retention strategies to address workforce pressures. Despite these significant pressures the existing staff and providers of services have continued to ensure children and adults needs are met, risks are managed and safeguarding issues dealt with.
- 6.1.5 Our Early Year's Child Care and Play Team have continued to provide a full range of services throughout 2021/22. The Flying Start settings remained open to the communities they serve and offered space to enable Health Visitors to undertake their clinics. The team successfully coordinated and delivered an amazing programme of activities using the summer of fun and winter of well-being grants from Welsh Government which was aimed at providing children and young people 0 –25 with activities.
- 6.1.6 The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020-25 continues to reduce the numbers of children looked after and at the end of March 2022 numbers stood at 198 down from 211 the previous year (down from a high of 237). The My Support Team have continued to engage with our most complex children in residential care by providing intensive face to face support. Due to the success of the team Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire have decided to move away from a joint to individual teams. The Blaenau Gwent team became operational from April 2022 and is expected to continue to reduce the numbers of children in residential care.
- 6.1.7 Adult Services continue to work to the 8 key themes of the Living Independently in the Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy. This strategy was due to be reviewed during 21/22 however the pressures of dealing with the pandemic did not allow this. Work to the review the strategy will be completed during 2022/23 in collaboration with our colleagues in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The key theme of the Social Services and Well-being Act is to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. Within the annual report it is highlighted where the Directorate has worked closely with the public to improve

service delivery and user outcomes. Reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Annual report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The work undertaken by the department looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than reactive approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and not spending as much on services in the future.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Social Services work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The purpose of the SSWBA is to foster integration between Health and Social Services.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The workforce who deliver the functions of the SSWBA 2014 have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

All service provision and functions that sit under social services are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.9b ***Equality Impact Assessment***

The overarching vision is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

7.1 Monitoring of the performance of the Social Services Directorate will be reported through the People Scrutiny Committee as per the forward work programme.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Director of Social Services